



A Memoir

By

Obie R. Silverwood

- Copyright © 2016 by Obed (Obie) R. Silverwood -

All rights reserved under relevant Copyright Conventions. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the written permission of Obed R. Silverwood.

Published by
- Obie R. Silverwood -
7001 Palomino Dr.
Sanger, CA 93657 U.S.A.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2016915455

ISBN 978-0-692-78297-2

Printed in the United States of America
First Edition

Although the author has conducted appropriate research to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this book, he assumes no responsibility for errors, inaccuracies or omissions herein. Any slights of individuals, groups, businesses, organizations, material objects or geographic locations are unintentional.

Danjaq LLC and EON Productions have not endorsed or authorized this book, nor has the Ian Fleming estate.

- TABLE OF CONTENTS -

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1: *The Soviets*

Chapter 2: *Monte Carlo*

Chapter 3: *License to Thrill*

Chapter 4: *Almost Snake-bit*

Chapter 5: *Grand Marnier in the Morning*

Chapter 6: *Shaken, but not Deterred*

Chapter 7: *Cowbells and Samurais*

Chapter 8: *007 – You Break it, You Buy it*

Chapter 9: *Ouch!*

Chapter 10: *Ritz-to-Ritz*

Chapter 11: *Gunshots and Villains*

Chapter 12: *Oeufs a la Neige*

Chapter 13: *Ferris Wheel*

Chapter 14: *The Dead Snake Hill Climb*

Chapter 15: *Totally Nude*

- Chapter 16: *Supercars*
- Chapter 17: *Gilly Required*
- Chapter 18: *007 Watches and Ronald McDonald*
- Chapter 19: *Chased by Blofeld – I Wish*
- Chapter 20: *Iced Martinis, ala Bond*
- Chapter 21: *\$1,600 Dinner*
- Chapter 22: *Aston Martin Wins!*
- Chapter 23: *Where's First Class?*
- Chapter 24: *Were We Crazy?*
- Chapter 25: *His and Her Astons*
- Chapter 26: *The Best of all Worlds*
- Chapter 27: *Happy Birthday James*
- Chapter 28: *The Redwoods*
- Chapter 29: *Little Nell*
- Chapter 30: *Shaken and Disturbed*
- Chapter 31: *Take my Picture*
- Chapter 32: *Good-bye Moonraker – Almost*
- Chapter 33: *The Desire, Time and Money*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My sincere thank you goes to Ian Fleming for creating the *James Bond* novels, and, of course, to Danjaq and EON Productions for bringing *Bond* to life on the silver screen in their spectacular movies, some of which I will be commenting upon in the following pages.

I also thank the friends and acquaintances Joy and I made while pursuing the *Bond life*. They certainly enhanced our adventures.

Appreciation need also be expressed to the professional staffs of all the restaurants, hotels, trains, airlines, cruise ships, automotive race tracks, race teams, Alpine ski facilities and Aston Martin dealerships who provided the products and services that enabled our *Bond dreams* to come true.

Finally, and most important, my greatest thanks goes to Joy, my beautiful wife of forty-three years, for being my *Bond girl*!

INTRODUCTION

It reminds me now of *Casino Royale*, the scene in which *James Bond* and *Vesper Lynd* were dining alone at the *Hotel Splendide*. My wife's lovely blue eyes sparkled with light from the crystal chandeliers. Joy and I were in St. Moritz to ski and seated that evening at a quiet table in the Palace Hotel's dining room. Fingering my lapel, I glanced up at the waiter, smiled, and uttered, "*Bond, James Bond.*" He straightened a bit, raised his eyebrows, looked down his long French nose and said, "Yes, *Monsieur*, but white dinner jackets are worn only in the summer." Needless to say, I spent the rest of the evening peeking out of my shoe laces. Such were the lessons to be learned by a California guy wishing to be *Bond*.

As a teen I idolized Sean Connery's super-spy character and in adulthood did my best to emulate him - without killing anyone, of course. I studied foreign languages, trained in judo, karate, sword fencing and Alpine skiing; honed my gastronomic and wine tasting skills, acquired an Aston Martin and sought out the *good life*, traveling the world, experiencing the finest hotels and restaurants, and pursuing sports, *a la Bond* - with my beautiful wife, Joy, my *Bond Girl*, by my side.

So, light your reading lamp, get comfortable, then buckle-up to race a supercar through Laguna Seca's infamous "Corkscrew" curves; and tuck-in your napkin to savor Duck a l'Orange washed-down with Moet Champagne at the Paris Ritz; and brace yourself to plummet at 60 mph down an Olympic bobsled run; then sit back and relax in the warm bubbling waters of the Tschuggen's renown health spa.

Together, come, let's you and I ski the Alps, play on the French Riviera and live the *007 life!*

Chapter 1: *The Soviets*

The most memorable scene in the novel, *From Russia with Love*, was of *James Bond* riding the Orient Express from Istanbul through Budapest to Paris. The idea for the scene had two sources: Ian Fleming had ridden the same route; and, he was aware of what happened to Eugene Karp, a U. S. intelligence agent based in Budapest who in February 1950 had taken the Orient Express from Budapest to Paris carrying secret papers about a blown U. S. spy network in the Eastern Bloc. Soviet assassins were waiting for Karp on the train and his body was found later in a railway tunnel. Also, regarding Budapest, the St. Petersburg Statue Park scene in *GoldenEye* was filmed there. So, considering its Eastern Bloc history and significance in the *Bond* story, Budapest was an appropriate place to visit in my *007* adventure.

Joy and I arrived there by boat, via the Danube, and checked-in to the Marriott Hotel. Though very tasteful, the Marriott's modern glass, metal and cement architecture stood in stark contrast to the city's Old World elegance. Situated on the river, the Marriott is fronted by a restaurant lined promenade. We strolled the walkway that evening, opting for a casual dinner on the patio of an Italian restaurant, Trattoria Toscana, sharing a margarita pizza and

bottle of chianti. Hungary is not part of the European Union and still maintains its own currency, the *Forint*, ten thousand of which were required to pay our dinner check.

The next morning we took a tour of the city, the highlight of which was Heroes Square, so named in memory of the heroes who gave their lives for the freedom of the Hungarian people and their national independence.

In the center of the square is an eagle topped Roman column around which tower, nearly thirty feet high, the bronze horse-mounted “Seven Chieftains of the Magyars” - the original warlords of Hungary. Semi-circling the rear of the square are two colonnades, showcasing statues of the twelve historical rulers of Hungary.

America has been attacked, but never occupied by conquerors. So, I found Hungary’s history to be particularly poignant. It was invaded by the Mongols, then dominated by the Ottomans, then the Hapsburgs and then the Nazis. Worst of all, it fell into the hands of the Soviets after World War II.

Driving back from the Heroes Square the tour director pointed out an interesting building. “That was the Nazi SS headquarters,” he said, with distaste in his mouth. “And when the Soviets took over it became their KGB headquarters,” he added, with even greater disdain. This made me think back to “*From Russia with Love*,” that was probably the building from which the Soviet assassins were dispatched to kill the U.S. agent, Karp, on the Orient Express. The Soviets had a special military branch,

SMERSH, whose function it was to kill spies. SMERSH is mentioned in the *Bond* novels, *Casino Royale*, *Live and Let Die*, *Goldfinger*, *Thunderball* and *The Spy Who Loved Me*, and in the movie, *The Living Daylights*.

That evening we dined at a restaurant that previously had been a church, rich in filigree, marble and balustrades. There was a grand piano near our table, sitting quiet. Part way through our meal a young bearded fellow walked in off the street, sat down at the piano and started playing Tchaikovsky, Brahms and other classical pieces. When he stopped and started to rise I offered him a tip, but he waived it off, left and continued on down the street.

In the morning, after a sumptuous breakfast, we took a cab to the Hungarian National Gallery, at which we observed an impressive “changing of the guard.” The soldiers’ uniforms were starkly reminiscent of Eastern Bloc military. Something most Americans only see in movies – not up close.

From there we wandered over to the Old Town and had lunch on the patio of a lovely little restaurant at which a violinist and guitarist serenaded us, reminding me of the theme from the post WWII Orson Welles’s movie, *The Third Man*. I could just imagine Welles as *Harry Lime* getting Joseph Cotton, as *Holly Martins*, up on the Ferris Wheel in Vienna to threaten him.

That afternoon we visited the *Marketplace*. Unbelievable! To the best of my knowledge, there is nothing like it in the United States. Two football field sized levels of every type

of vegetable, meat, fish and food vendor one could imagine, and little restaurants and curios stores. The spice fragrances, game, fowl and fish odors, and cornucopia of produce overwhelmed the senses. At the request of an American friend, who is a Hungarian expatriate, while we were there we purchased fresh Paprika for her, with which many Hungarian meals are spiced.

Our last day we saw *The Shoes on the Danube*, a sculpted memorial to the Jews who were shot by the Arrow Cross militiamen during World War II. The victims had to take off their shoes and valuables, then were lined-up and shot on the banks of the Danube.

Of all my 007 experiences, our visit to Budapest best revealed the post war Soviet adversarial times that gave birth to the world's greatest spy - *James Bond*.

Chapter 1 – View of the Danube river from our Budapest hotel room.



Chapter 1 – Heroes' Square, Budapest. (Photo by Bruno Dietl)



Chapter 1 – Joy with a sentry at the Budapest National Gallery. He looked like someone out of a *Bond* movie.



Chapter 1 - Military troops in Budapest, very reminiscent of the old Eastern Bloc. The Hungarians detested the post WWII Soviet occupation and are still stinging over it.



Chapter 2: *Monte Carlo*

It was in Monte Carlo where *Bond* gambled with *Xenia Onatopp* in *GoldenEye*; and danced with *Domino* in *Never Say Never Again* at the Casino Royale. So, without doubt, *La Cote d'Azur* was an imperative on my 007 list.

As *Bond* pulled-up in his Aston Martin DB5 he saw that *Xenia's* red Ferrari was parked in front of the Casino. Likewise, as Joy and I arrived at Monaco, our rental car was surrounded by three red Ferraris, because we had scheduled our visit to coincide with the *Formula One Grand Prix* there.

We selected a viewing spot a few blocks above the street course, allowing us to see the competitors racing by at several points. It was lightly raining, which made conditions challenging. A couple of cars had been damaged in a spin-out at the first corner and leaked gearbox oil onto the track, which caused Niki Lauda to slide-off and stall his motor, putting him out of the race.

The sounds of those powerful engines winding-out and reverberating through the tunnel under the Fairmont Hotel was exhilarating. The race was won that day by Alain Prost, driving a McLaren.

Though playing *Bond's* favorite game, *Baccarat Chemin de Fer*, at the Casino was not in my budget, we did enjoy our stay in Monte Carlo.

Our next stop on the Riviera was Nice, where *Bond* had met the CIA agent, *Felix Leiter*, at the airport. There, we strolled the *Promenade des Anglais*, lined with casinos and on which the esteemed Hotel Palais de la Mediterranee is situated. That evening our concierge recommended a restaurant renowned for its seafood selections. We had dressed tastefully and it was now raining harder, so I dropped-off Joy in front of the restaurant and went to find a parking spot, of which there were none nearby. Though I had an umbrella, returning to the restaurant I could not avoid some very deep puddles, which overflowed my loafers. Dinner with wet feet might be fun for a duck, but it was a soggy experience for me.

On a day outing we passed through Cap d'Antibes, where *Bond*, in *Diamonds Are Forever*, had choked a girl with her bikini top to find out where *Blofeld* was hiding. The "girl" had been portrayed by a French actress, Denise Perrier, whose father was the mayor of Nice.

Coincidentally, a couple of years later, while attending an international business conference in Irvine, California, I ran into Jacques Médecin, who had been the Mayor of Nice during our visit there. Taking the opportunity to practice my limited French, I tried to relate my wet shoes story to him, which he found humorous – or possibly it was my French he found humorous. In any case, he said, "I will teach you 2,000 French words in one minute." Delighted

and curious, I said, “Please do,” to which he responded, “Almost all English words that end with ‘...ion’ are the same in French.”

Our final Riviera venue was St. Tropez, at which we lunched by the harbor and walked the beach. The tanning girls brought thoughts to my mind of Brigitte Bardot, who put that location on the map by starring in “*And God Created Women*” in which she was romantically pursued by *Kurt Jurgens* (see Chapter 11), who later played the villain, *Karl Stromberg*, in *The Spy Who Loved Me*.

Chapter 2 – Obie and Joy arriving at the Riviera surrounded by Ferraris.



Chapter 2 – View of Monte Carlo, *Grand Prix* day.



Chapter 2 – Joy and Obie on the Promenade des Anglais,
by the esteemed Hotel Palais de la Mediterranee.



Chapter 2 – Joy in St. Tropez.



Chapter 3: *License to Thrill*

Joy and I sometimes rent a house on the coast to avoid the summer heat of our country home. One such year we had friends, Tony and Jena Albin, staying with us who wanted to attend the Historic Auto Races at Laguna Seca, California. I had no interest in going, but Joy insisted we join them.

The *Historics*, now called, “The Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion,” features more than 500 vintage sports cars that compete on Laguna Seca Raceway’s 2.24-mile road course. Well, we were there no more than fifteen minutes and, as I watched and listened to the Ferraris, Aston Martins and Lamborghinis roar by, the hair on my arms came up and I said, “I’ve got to have one of those.”

The next three months I researched, priced and test drove different marques. Years earlier, at Joy’s prompting, I had purchased a new BMW Z3, because it was *Bond*’s standard issue car then in “*GoldenEye*.” Wrestling with the decision of what to buy now, I asked Joy what she thought.

“You’ve always loved *James Bond*, the choice is obvious,” she said.

As usual, she was right – after all, Aston Martin has always been *Bond*’s real “car of choice.” So, I purchased a DB7, which was the “turn-around” model that revitalized Aston

Martin's sales and became the inspiration for all future models. Super-charged, metallic black with a bone white leather interior, the coupe was sleek, fast and beautiful, and exuded *Bond* mystique. My personal license plate read: "007Obie," – my *License to Thrill*.

Owning the DB7 introduced me to an interesting crowd of racing, concours, touring and *James Bond* enthusiasts, about seventy of whom I pulled together as a club, ASTON ELITE ("AE"). Our members came from many walks of life, all interesting and pleasant people. As I have always said, AE was not about the cars; it was about making friends.

I put considerable thought into designing the club logo, which was a set of automotive wings imposed over a martini glass bearing the numbers, "007." Our club shirts, lapel pins, wrist watches and banners all bore that logo.

As you might recall, their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, drove from their wedding in HRH Prince Charles' royal blue Aston Martin DB6, which prompted me to send them an AE lapel pin as a wedding present. Sometime thereafter I was contacted by a charity in Kent, England, asking for information about an AE pin that had been donated to the charity and was being placed up for auction on eBay UK. I assume it was the one I sent to the Duke and that the royal family probably donates all such gifts to charity. Impressively, the AE pin did achieve a high bid of \$276. Later, I received a very nice thank you letter from the Duke and Duchess, which I would love to

have shared in this chapter, but it was specifically marked, “Private and Confidential.”

The *James Bond* Aston Martin DB5 first featured in *Goldfinger* sold for \$4,600,000 in London in 2010. One of the RM Auction officials told me later that he noticed some in the audience wearing AE lapel pins. My, my – how our little club got around.

AE’s tongue-in-cheek motto was, “What would *Bond* do?” which I certainly employed in creating many exciting driving and social events over the club’s five-year life. We raced, partied and lived the “*Bond life*,” some tales of which will be shared in the following pages.

Chapter 3 - ASTON ELITE Logo and club watches.



Chapter 3 - Aston Martin, *Bond's* car of choice. Obie's DB7 (Photo by Steve Williams).



Chapter 3 – *License to Thrill*



Chapter 4: *Almost Snake-Bit*

The Aston Elite Wildflower Run was an absolute blast! We started Friday evening at our Wonder Valley home with a champagne reception and dinner for eight Aston Martin friends. The next morning Joy and I drove over to the Wonder Valley Resort Ranch, which had provided comfortable lodging for the out-of-towners and prepared great box lunches for everyone. We then drove through the wildflower covered Sierra foothills along the Kings River to the Harris Ranch thoroughbred horse farm (breeder of Kentucky Derby winner, “California Chrome”), at which the owner, John Harris, had generously allowed us use of his private airstrip for the day’s driving event.

To make the competition a little more interesting, I had invited some other car friends: Steve Moe with his 2006 Corvette; and Fred and Pam Campbell with their 2000 Viper RT-10; and Bruce Cambern, who, from his collection of racing and supercars, trailered in his 1966 Shelby Cobra (original).

Wanting to keep the speeds under 100 miles per hour, we first sat-up a 1/8-mile slalom course with orange plastic cones on the flight-strip’s center line every 110 feet. I took a position at the finish line with my *James Bond* “*Moonraker*” digital wristwatch, which had a stopwatch feature accurate to one hundredth of a second.

With helmets on, seat belts tight and fire extinguishers at the ready, everyone queued up for their first run. Things went quite well with the Astons, each of which maneuvered the course with speed and agility. The Aston is an extremely stable car. In the movie, *Casino Royale*, the production crew had set-up an 18-inch ramp that was intended to cause *Bond's* Aston Martin DBS to flip when he swerves to avoid *Vesper Lynd*, who was laying in the road. The idea was to hit the ramp with the front passenger wheel, which should flip it over on to its top. They tested the physics using another luxury sports sedan marque, which flipped as planned. The problem was, when they went to shoot the scene using an Aston, they could not get it to flip – no matter how many times they tried, the car would go up on to two wheels then come back down on to all four. Eventually, it was necessary to mount a pneumatic cannon under the passenger side of the DBS, which thrust a metal stanchion into the ground causing the car to flip.

Unlike the Astons, Fred's Viper did not have electronic traction control, which made it a little difficult keeping its 535 horses in line. The photos for this chapter show the Viper sliding sideways around the last pylon at about 70 miles per hour. Another photo shows his skid marks. As you can see, he went right through the four end-of-run marker cones, just missing me and my camera. I had promised John Harris that there would be no alcohol consumed at the event, but after dodging that Viper I would have loved a martini – shaken, stirred or whatever! You might say I was *almost snake-bit*.

Fred's next run ended up going off the side of the runway and doing a 360-degree spin into an orange grove. When he drove back onto the track, we didn't know whether to pity him or laugh. His car, which he always kept

immaculately clean, was now completely covered inside and out with dirt - as was he. The Corvette also proved to be a bit power squirrely in its slalom run, breaking loose with each turn. The “*piece de resistance*” was Bruce’s 800 HP Cobra accurately snaking the course at incredible speed.

Next, we removed the center cones and commenced the sprint runs, which were equally exciting, with the Cobra, again, beating our fastest times by about two seconds. With no injuries and lots of smiles, we settled into a relaxing group lunch under the large oak trees.

That evening, the fourteen of us reconvened at the Cedar View Winery for a private tasting, *hors d’oeuvres* and dinner, after which award presentations were made for the day’s competition. The fastest slalom and sprint times went to Bruce Cambern, but as Randy Hardcastle remarked, Bruce had brought a gun to a knife fight. The fastest combined slalom/sprint time for an Aston Martin went to Ed Mitchell, and a special award for the “largest dust cloud” went to Fred Campbell, whose car actually slid sideways across the finish line faster than my DB7 did going straight – though I did have the best “on foot” time for dodging Fred’s oncoming Viper.

Bruce Cambern had been the Director of Worldwide Racing for the Ford Motor Company when Ford owned Aston Martin. At the end of the evening I asked him what he thought of our little event. He said, “most car club track days are too serious, but our AE competition today was just a lot of fun - like such events should be.”

How might *Bond* have done? We will never know. But, John Harris, after surveying his landing strip, had the best

final comment of the day: “I certainly hope no one will think those skid marks are from me landing my plane.”

Chapter 4 – Pre-race cocktail party at the Silverwood’s home.



Chapter 4 – Astons, Corvette, Viper and Cobra assemble on the Harris Ranch to compete.



Chapter 4 – Out of control Viper heading for Obie at the finish line.



Chapter 4 – Viper tracks.



Chapter 4 – Award dinner at the Cedar View Winery.



Chapter 5: *Grand Marnier in the Morning*

Tuxedos, beautiful women, luxury hotels and Alpine skiing. If there is one place on the face of the earth that best captures the essence of *James Bond*, it is St. Moritz, Switzerland. Ian Fleming's memories of St. Moritz are reflected in his novels, mentioning it first in *Goldfinger*. Naturally, I had to go there.

In *For Your Eyes Only*, *Bond* rendezvous with fellow spy, "Luigi" at a ski resort, where they exchange a coded greeting. *Luigi* says, "The snow this year is better at Innsbruck," and *Bond* responds, "...but, not at St. Moritz." So, Joy and I decided to visit Innsbruck on our way to St. Moritz, to compare the snow, and as *Bond* might do, we stayed at the venerable Grand Hotel Europa, which has hosted such notables as *The Rolling Stones*, *Sting*, Queen Elizabeth II and the Prince of Monaco.

Our adventure in Innsbruck, of course, had to begin with Joy shopping. We strolled the narrow cobblestone streets of Old Town, exploring its quaint little stores and enjoying the charm and architecture of this lovely medieval city. Eventually, Joy bagged her treasure for the day, a

traditional Tyrol sweater in dark blue, embroidered with pink and powder blue flowers.

The next day we drove to Igls and skied at Patscherkofel, an Olympics and World Cup venue that overlooks Innsbruck. Our second day we tried Axamer Lizum, another Olympics site. The hill there was cloud shrouded and I nearly lost Joy in the fog, which made for dangerous skiing. After a pleasant lunch, Joy chose to rent cross-country skis and tour the local forest. I went back up the hill and, to my delight, found that the sun had prevailed.

We were a bit tired that evening and did not feel like getting dressed for a formal dinner in the hotel's elegant restaurant. So, though it was not on the room service menu, I asked if they could bring up some bratwurst, French fries and two steins of beer. A half an hour later there was a light knock at the door and an impeccably uniformed server rolled in a cart bedecked with white linen, fine china and ornate silverware. In a single motion he removed the two shining domed plate covers to reveal the simple meal we had ordered, which now seemed like *haute cuisine* – very impressive!

The next morning we packed and walked across to the train station to get our tickets to St. Moritz. I must have misread the schedule, because I immediately realized we had only fifteen minutes to board, and Swiss trains do not linger for late passengers. So, we hurried back to the hotel, grabbed a couple of bags, checked out and asked the porter to go to our room and bring our remaining luggage to the train. We had two ski bags, two boot bags, two garment bags and four

suitcases – ten bags in all, two of which we were carrying. With about three minutes left, I helped Joy onto the train with the two pieces of luggage, then I rushed back across the street to find the porter, who was just exiting the hotel. As the rosy cheeked young man in grey livery hurriedly pulled the loaded luggage cart in my direction, I motioned him to follow me. We reached the platform just as the train was starting to pull away, and a gentleman passenger was helping Joy off the train and handing down our two bags to her – she was afraid I was not going to make it back in time and did not want to get stuck heading off to St. Moritz without me. We made eye contact and I signaled her to get back on the train. The man who had helped her off, now with a confused look on his face, helped her back on. I jumped aboard as the winded porter ran alongside thrusting bags up to me one at a time. My last gesture to the poor fellow was tossing him a handful of Swiss bank notes, which fluttered in the wind as we pulled away. He had surely earned them.

Joy was flustered and my heart was racing as we flopped down in our first class seats. I said, "...just a minute," then went to the luggage storage area at the end of our car. On returning I was holding my silver ski flask, from which we both gulped a couple of shots of *Grand Marnier*. What a way to start the day!

On the subject of *Grand Marnier*, a brief aside story: Joy and I were skiing once in the French Alps at Val d'Isere. On reaching the bottom of a run we saw a charming little shop purveying *Grand Marnier* crepes. The sign above the service window read, "*Arrousez vous-meme votre crepe,*"

(anoint your own crepe) and there was a magnum size container of *Grand Marnier* sitting on the counter. The burly fellow behind the window would cook your crepe, place it on a plate, sprinkle it with powdered sugar and pass it through. You, then, could douse it with as much *Grand Marnier* as you pleased, which became our “last run” routine. What a way to end the day!

During our train ride to St. Moritz we noticed four shady looking fellows lurking about. Long hair, smoking, oddly dressed. Every time one of them ventured towards the end of the car I got up and watched to make sure he was not getting into our luggage. We would see these fellows again (Chapter 9: *Ouch!*).

The remainder of our trip to St. Moritz went well, and the experience had been a good lesson learned: From then on, when traveling in Europe by train, we had the hotel concierge rail freight our luggage ahead to our next destination, so we did not have to handle it onboard, which can be very difficult, particularly if you must change trains mid-journey.

Chapter 5 – Old Town Innsbruck.



Chapter 5 – Getting ready to ski at Innsbruck.



Chapter 5 – *Grand Marnier* crepes in Val d'Iser. Pour as much as you like.



Chapter 6: *Shaken, but not Deterred*

There is something eerie about a racetrack at sunrise, waiting to roar into life with the thunder of engines, the screeching of tires and, sometimes, the wail of sirens. Yes, waiting to declare its champions, its losers and, sometimes, its victims.

When first I met Lord Paul Drayson, the Barron of Kensington, he was serving as Minister of Science and Innovation, and Minister of State for Defense Equipment for the United Kingdom. He was also racing his Aston Martin V8 Vantage, numbered 007, in the American Le Mans series, and went on to compete in the renown *24 Hours of Le Mans* in France. Beyond being a good driver, what made this particularly amazing was that Paul is blind in one eye.

To honor his race achievements, I had arranged a dinner party at the Quail Lodge in Carmel Valley, hosting him and his alternate driver, British GT champion, Jonny Cocker, race team manager, Dale White, and Tom Moore, Drayson's VP of Marketing.

Paul holds a doctorate in robotics and his lovely wife, Lady Elspeth, is equally educated with degrees in physics and business from Oxford. Though accomplished and titled, I found them to be very real and friendly. Family oriented,

they traveled the race circuit with their four children, for whom I arranged a baby sitter that evening.

After introducing the Draysons and his team to our group, I presented him a Trophy on behalf of the East Coast Aston Martin Owners Club for his racing achievements in the United States in an Aston Martin. But, something very special was to follow. Joy, in her cleverness, had arranged for me to meet with racing legend, Mario Andretti, who I had sign a congratulatory letter to Paul. From the look on Lord Drayson's face when I presented the letter to him, I suspicion that it will forever occupy a special place on his trophy room wall.

The award banquet was enjoyed by all and we wrapped it up early, so Paul and his team could get adequate rest – they would be racing the next morning in the American Le Mans season finale'.

The American Le Mans series (ALMS) was fashioned on the renown *24 Hours of Le Mans* race held in Le Mans each June in which four classes of cars compete on a road course. The Le Mans Prototype 1 and 2 (LMP1 & 2) classes are low-slung, purpose built race cars that approach 200 miles per hour, and the Grand Touring 1 & 2 (GT1 & 2) classes are modified production built sports cars, such as Lamborghini, Ferrari, Corvette, Aston Martin, Maserati and Porsche, which approach speeds of 175 miles per hour in competition.

The ALMS (now replaced by the International Motor Sports Association, "IMSA") took place across the U.S. at

famous racing venues such as Sebring, St. Petersburg, Road Atlanta, Long Beach and Laguna Seca, which is a 2.24-mile paved road course with eleven turns that traverse 180 feet of elevation. Say the word, “Corkscrew” to any motor racing enthusiast and they will know you are referring to the wild, twisting, down-hill plunge at turn eight of Laguna Seca.

On race morning Joy and I headed over to Drayson’s paddock to wish him and Jonny luck. This would be a six-hour race with the two drivers changing off a couple of times. Previously, Paul had been competing in his number 007 GT2 Aston, but for this race, the season finale’, he had upgraded to a Lola with a 700 horse power Judd engine, running in the LMP1 class. Jonny had placed well in qualifying the previous day, giving their Lola a good starting position. It would be a tight field, with about 40 cars jockeying for the best lines through the turns. At the speeds achieved by these special machines, one’s best driving skills are mandatory.

All of the cars had been driven onto the track and, as is sometimes allowed, the fans were permitted to walk amongst them and meet the drivers. The spectators were then cleared, cars staged in their starting order and the countdown begun for the green light.

Having viewed many races here, Joy and I favored sitting along a down-hill stretch between curves nine and ten. Even with sound dampers in our ears, we could hear the distant roar of the cars charging away from the starting line. Multiple downshifts soon signaled us that they were

coming into the Corkscrew curves, just above us. Our excitement grew on seeing Paul's number 88 green Lola, emblazoned with the British flag, fly by with the leaders. On the second lap he strengthened his position. Disaster came in the third, and strangely, directly across from where Joy and I were sitting. As Paul accelerated out of turn nine a Porsche Spyder was following too close and clipped his left rear tire, which knocked the Lola out of control and into the gravel – bringing viewers to their feet. Traveling at about 100 miles per hour Paul's car smashed into the wall, which, thankfully, was cushioned with stacked tires. For about one minute, which seemed more like one hour, we held our breaths. The Lola's gull-winged door popped open and Paul slowly crawled out. His first few steps were wobbly, but he looked across and waived, prompting cheers from all of us. The car was finished for the day, but Paul was okay – *shaken, but not deterred*.

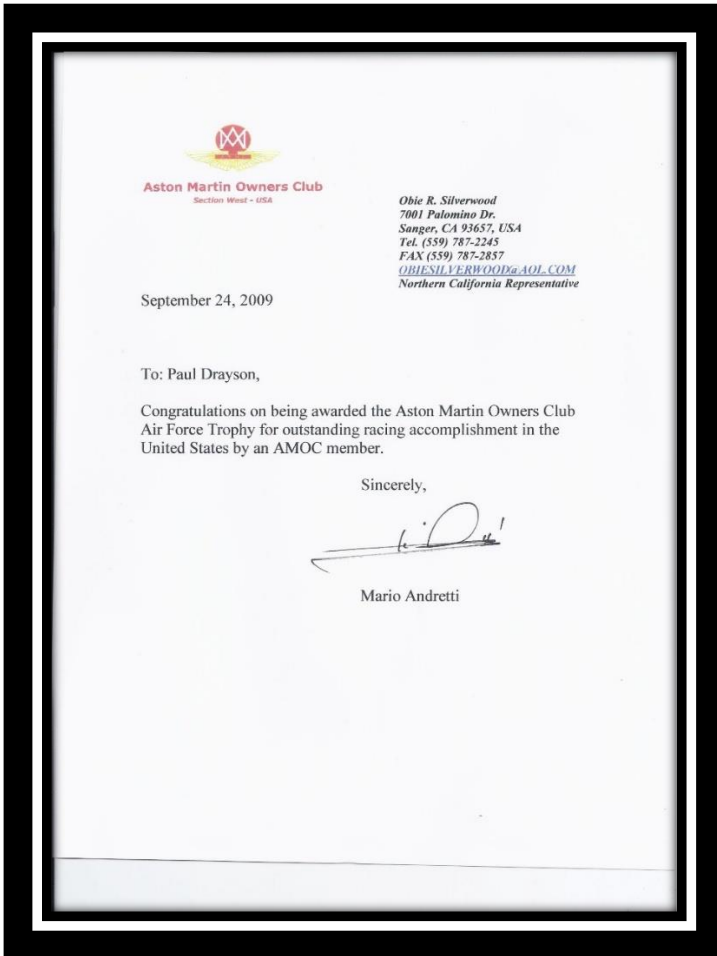
Chapter 6 – Obie presenting an award to Aston Martin racer, Lord Paul Drayson.



Chapter 6 – Obie by Paul’s 007 GT2 Aston at Laguna Seca.



Chapter 6 – The letter Obie secured from Mario Andretti congratulating Lord Drayson.



Chapter 6 – Paul preparing to race his Lola in the American Le Mans.



Chapter 6 – Paul’s 100 miles per hour crash directly across from where Joy and Obie were seated. He walked away, *shaken, but not deterred.*



Chapter 7: *Cow Bells and Samarais*

James Bond, in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, is chased through a skating rink and Christmas festival in *Grindelwald*, and filches documents from the safe of *Blofeld's* attorney in Bern, both locations in Switzerland. And, Joy's family name, *Halderman*, traces back to medieval Bern. So, those venues needed a check-mark on my 007 list.

We had rented a car in Zurich, swung up through Lichtenstein and Austria, then across Germany and back down to Bern, the capital of Switzerland. Founded in the 12th century, Bern's city center is largely medieval in architecture, though there is also substantial modern office development.

It would have been nice to visit the actual building in which *Bond* had pilfered *Blofeld's* papers, but I could find no information on it at that time - there was no Google in 1978. So, we just enjoyed the city, in general. It was certainly a more pleasant visit than our recent, 2016, forced journey to the U.S. Embassy there to obtain an emergency passport, after having been robbed on the train (see: Chapter 32).

We then motored on to Thun, a lovely Swiss town surrounding its classic castle, which possessed an impressive display of medieval swords, lances, shields and

body armor. Looking at the battlements and old weapons, one could easily imagine showers of arrows flying as the feudal war lords fought-off sieges. The thought made me happy to be living in modern times.

The next morning we were awoken earlier than we preferred, to the sound of bells. Looking out our second floor pension window we found that it was “market day” and the ancient streets and alleys were filled with farm product vendors and cattle – some of which were wearing traditional Swiss bells.

After breakfast we strolled to the docks of Lake Thun and boarded a boat for the scenic eleven-mile cruise to Interlaken, where we caught a train up to Grindelwald – a quintessential Swiss Alpine village. I must admit, it was difficult to envision *Bond* running the streets there, trying to escape *Blofeld’s* henchmen. In OHMSS *Bond* was played by George Lazenby. Though Sean Connery will always be the real face of *Bond*, I think that Lazenby’s portrayal was one of the best.

From Grindelwald we boarded the Jungfraubahn for the 25% ascent to the Jungfrauoch. This unique cogwheel train runs almost entirely within the Jungfrau Tunnel, built into the Eiger and Monch mountains.

At the top, the highest railway station in Europe (11,200 feet), we had lunch, observed the Aletsch Glacier and explored the Jungfrauoch’s ice caverns where we saw a rather strange site - a Japanese tourist in traditional

Samurai attire – including wooden sandals. Why, I don't know. Perhaps a lost villain from "*You Only Live Twice*."

An interesting aside, *The Eiger Sanction*, an excellent spy movie starring Clint Eastwood, was filmed there. Joy and I have often dined at Clint's Mission Ranch Inn during our summer stays in Carmel. One evening as we were arriving for dinner there, I saw him walking across the parking lot. I rolled down my window and, with a smile on my face, said, "Hey, there's no parking spots here!"

"Take mine, I'm leaving," was his friendly response.

Chapter 7 – Bern, Switzerland.



Chapter 7 – Joy in Thun Castle.



Chapter 7 – Joy in the Thun marketplace, where we were awakened to cowbells.



Chapter 7 – Obie atop the Jungfrauoch. Aletsch Glacier in the background.



Chapter 8: 007 - *You Break it You Buy it*

Chomping at the bit to test an Aston Martin Vantage GT4 race car, I frowned at the sky blackening-up over The Thermal Club (TTC) - a private race track near Palm Springs, California. Though warm weather had been expected for the two day driving session hosted by Pirelli Tires and The Racer's Group (TRG), a major storm was now forecast. Sensing my concern, Kevin Buckler, TRG's owner, said, "No problem, Obie...it rains in England you know. The Astons will do fine on the track." And, he was right!

Kevin, a *24 Hour of Le Mans* champion, along with Pirelli tires, had organized the Aston Martin GT4 North American Challenge, drawing gentlemen racers from around the country. To support the series, TRG provided cars for purchase or rent, pit crews and race driving instructions.

The Thermal Club is a first class facility with a 1.8-mile track, autocross course, garages, track-side private villas/paddocks, a fleet of race ready Porsches for members' use, and a professional staff dedicated to making your day fun and safe.

Pirelli had a team of four technicians and a semi-truck of tires at trackside to support the two-day session. TRG's

twelve-man pit crew, under the command of its race team manager, Steve Cameron, had prepped six GT4's for us, with two experienced team drivers standing ready to instruct: James Davison, a 28-year-old third generation Aussie racer with a solid record in both Indy and GT competitions; and Kris Wilson, who had been racing for 27 years in both the Continental Tire Challenge and the American Le Mans series.

We assembled in a staging tent at 7:30 the first morning for the obligatory signing of the liability release forms and track information. Each of these cars were valued in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, and Kevin had half-jokingly advised me, "*You break it you buy it.*" So, before putting my name to the line, I looked at Joy and asked, "Do you think I should do this?" After all, it was her money too. Again, being the ultimate fun enabler, she smiled and answered, "Of course."

Everyone was anxious to get on the track while it was still dry, but it was not long until the Pirelli fellows were swapping the sticky slicks for grooved rain tires. At one point the deluge got so heavy that mud flooded a section of the track. The sophistication of the clean-up equipment used and the speed at which TTC's maintenance crew cleared and dried the track was amazing.

Cameron, the team manager, motioned me over and partnered me with professional driver, James Davison. I had the pleasure a few months later of watching James compete in the renown *Indianapolis 500*, where he did well

– particularly at dodging an out of control car that just about took him out early in that race.

We donned helmets and were assigned to car 007, a white steed, its 450 horses rumbling with pent energy. To access the cockpit, I had to remove the window webbing and steering wheel, then crawl through the reinforced roll-bar structure, which took a bit of agility, considering that I was 69 years old at that time and not quite as limber as in my youth. But, once behind the wheel I found the GT4 to be an absolute blast. As Kevin Buckler promised, these cars performed well on dry or wet surfaces. Built by Aston Martin and Prodrive, the Vantage GT4 is modeled on the V8 Vantage S street version. With its driver friendly paddle shifting, ABS and traction control, a novice can be race ready after a few days of instruction. Gracing the sleek lines of the street version, the GT4 also provides driver safety with a full roll bar cage, quick release steering wheel, window nets, head restraints and OMP fire suppression. Daytona timed at 175 mph, these vehicles were tripped-out to the max. The acceleration, maneuverability, shifting, and braking were exceptional – and the sound! That big V8 with straight through pipes was enough to scare competitors off the track.

With James riding shotgun, I maneuvered the GT4 along pit lane and out onto the track. I took it easy on the first lap, wanting to get the feel of the brakes. There were still some wet spots on the course and the last thing I wanted to do was spin-out into a wall and have to buy that car. On my second lap I was getting down the timing of paddle shifting into and out of the curves, when a 450 HP Porsche

GT3 Cup car blew by me on the outside. Later, back in pit lane, I met that driver, Brian Anderson of Fort Lauderdale, a semi-retired CFO of a Fortune 500 company. Brian's home track was Sebring, and he also raced at Road Atlanta, VIR, Daytona and Road America in the PCA GTA-1 class and he owned a GT3 Cup car modified to an RSR style.

At each turn I was picking up speed and improving my handling of the car, until I hit a slippery spot and just about lost it, which gave James a good laugh – actually, my driving was probably putting him to sleep. All-in-all, it was a fun experience. I've driven my own Aston at speed on many a club run in the foot hills of Central California, but piloting the 007 GT4 was a real *James Bond* thrill.

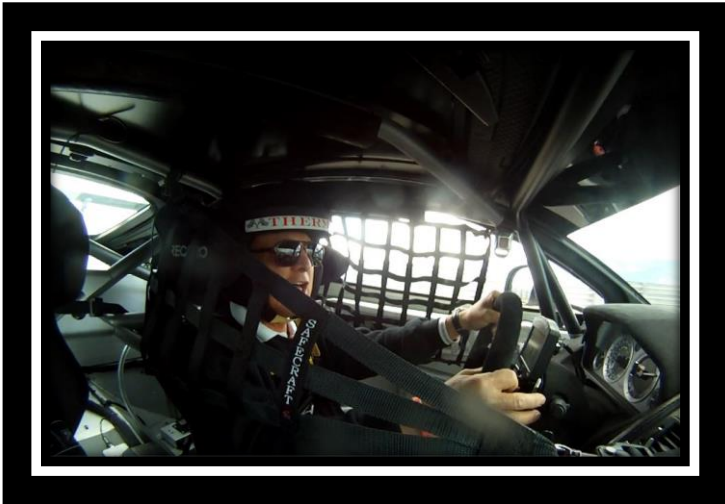
Yes, the driving was fun and the hospitality made it even better. TTC's club facility had everything one could want for breakfast, and TRG provided chef prepared lunches at track-side both days. Another of Kevin Buckler's entrepreneurial hats was his Adobe Road Winery, whose wines we all enjoyed with a gourmet dinner one evening at Mastro's Restaurant in Palm Desert.

I had the opportunity while at TTC to speak with Alan Wilson, who designed the track. Alan, the former Director of Brands Hatch Raceway in England, also designed Barber Motorsport Park in Alabama and the Circuit Mont-Tremblant GT track in Canada. Alan's wife, Desire' Wilson, is one of only five women to ever have competed in Formula One racing

Chapter 8 – Aston Martin GT4's staged for drivers at the Thermal Club race track by Palm Springs.



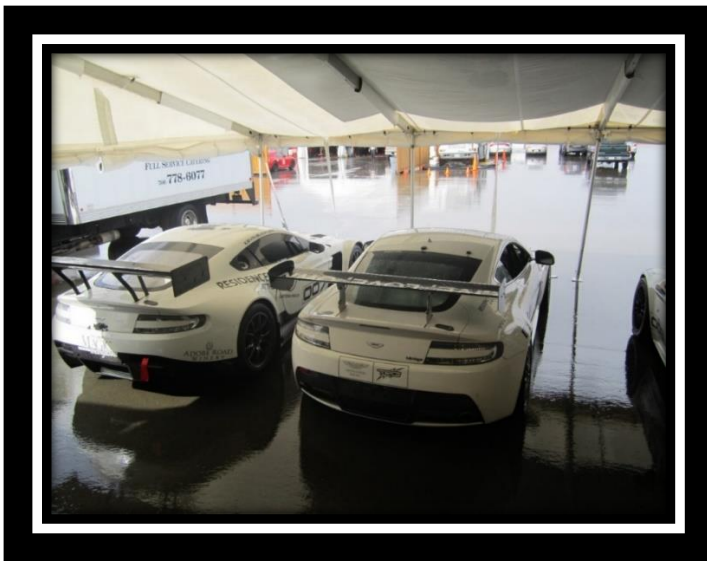
Chapter 8 – Obie doing laps in a GT4 Aston – a real thrill!



Chapter 8 – Brian Anderson, Porsche racer who flew by Obie on the track.



Chapter 8 – Heavy rain in the paddock and on the track created a challenge.



Chapter 8 – Joy and Obie at the Thermal Club, luckily he did not break the GT4 and have to buy it.



Chapter 9: *Ouch!*

Hitting iced curves at 70 miles per hour and five G's of force can do strange things to the body. *Bond* had no problem, so why should we?

The opening of the Kulm Hotel in St. Moritz in 1856 set the stage for luxury winter tourism in the Swiss Engadin. Followed by the Beau Rivage (which became the Palace), the Belvedere, the Grand, the Carlton, the Suvretta House and many more such hotels, the Kulm remains a shining five stars. Joy and I have stayed at a few hotels there, but the Kulm is our favorite.

I recall our first visit to St. Moritz in 1981. We were lodged at the venerable Belvedere Hotel and decided one evening to walk over to the Kulm for a drink. Though I was wearing a shirt, tie and leather aviator's jacket, we were politely denied access to the bar. Another lesson learned, gentlemen were expected to wear a suit, or at least a blazer, in the evening there.

On a later occasion we were staying at the Kulm and recognized another guest, Mr. Mayer, who we had seen on previous stays. He was an older fellow, about the age I am now, seventy-two, and had been coming to the Kulm for thirty years. He and his wife spent two weeks there every

winter and two weeks on Lake Lugano every summer. I asked Mr. Mayer what changes he had observed, customs wise, over the years. He said, “Gentlemen used to wear smoking (the European term for “Tuxedo”) every evening in the dining room, but now only on Sundays.”

Gentlemen are still expected to wear a dark suit and tie to dinner, or a white dinner jacket is appropriate in the summer. Most guests to the Kulm and other five-star Swiss resort hotels stay under a demi-pension arrangement, where breakfast and *haute cuisine* dinner in the grand dining room are included in the daily rate. The Kulm also invites its demi-pension guests to have dinner in the formal restaurant of its sister hotel, the Kronenhof in Pontresina, which, though smaller, is equally charming. *Bond* wise, the opening scene of *A View to a Kill* was filmed on the Morteratsch Glacier at Pontresina.

The Kulm is more than just luxury and fine dining, it is also the home of the Cresta Club and Kulm Park, which embodies a world class golf course, ice skating rink and Chesa al Parc, the Kulm’s stubli (traditional Swiss restaurant). Adjacent to the Kulm Park are the Olympic facilities (1928 and 1948), which feature the bobsled run and the Cresta Run.

Strolling the downhill course of the Cresta Run we encountered the same four shady looking young men we had seen on the train from Innsbruck. Hearing them speak American English I asked where they were from. As it turned out, they were a well-known (though not to us) punk-rock band from New York and were vacationing at

the prestigious Palace Hotel, which left me feeling somewhat silly that I had worried about them pilfering our luggage on the train.

I contemplated doing the Cresta Run myself. Unlike the one-man bobsled, which is done feet forward, the Cresta skeleton sled is ridden head first. Watching these madmen zip by at forty miles per hour on a thirty-inch sled, I decided to opt for the four-man Olympic bobsled, which looked much safer. After all, *Bond* had survived shooting down a bobsled run on skis in *For Your Eyes Only* and fought *Blofeld*, hand-to-hand, while riding a bobsled in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. So, what could possibly go wrong?

We hiked over to the starting area for the Olympic bobsled course, which is the headquarters for the St. Moritz Bobsleigh Club. Its president then, Gunter Sachs, was married to Brigitte Bardot. Sachs, a wealthy industrialist and international playboy, maintained an apartment at the Palace Hotel for many years. There are fourteen official bobsled runs in the world, and St. Moritz is the only one that uses entirely natural snow and ice – the rest are made from metal and concrete which is covered with snow and soaked with water, forming an icy surface.

As usual, I roped Joy into my adventure and she, ever the “good sport,” mistakenly agreed to join me. I hired an experienced Swiss bobsled pilot, Otto Scharer, and brakeman. Joy and I then donned helmets and crawled into the center “taxi” positions. Seconds later, our sleek blue four-man bobsled was careening down-hill at about 60

miles per hours, negotiating nearly one mile of radical turns. What a thrill! When it finally gritted to a stop, the brake biting into the ice, Joy was in pain.

“My back,” she groaned!

I countered, “It’s probably just a sprain...you’ll be fine.”

That afternoon, back at the Kulm, Joy sat waiting for me in the lobby as I tended some business with the concierge. Two older gentlemen walked by, both members of the Cresta Run Club, and noticed that she was holding her St. Moritz Bobsleigh Club certificate, signed by Gunter Sachs, which evidenced her daring ride.

“You did that?” they exclaimed!

The next morning, she could barely move. The center of her back was red, hot and swollen. At the hospital, after X-rays, we learned that she had sheered a tenth of an inch off of a vertebra. Apparently, on hitting one of the bobsled curves, her head had been thrust down in between her knees, bending her back so badly that it crushed the bone. Joy’s sweet, fashion model arms had lacked the strength to hold her body up against the five G’s of centrifugal force, and her back had paid the price. *Ouch!*

I have often told Joy, with a smile on my face, that when I die I would like it to be at ninety-nine years of age, in St. Moritz, in a suite at the Kulm, making love to her. Hopefully, by then, she will have forgiven me for taking her on the bobsled.

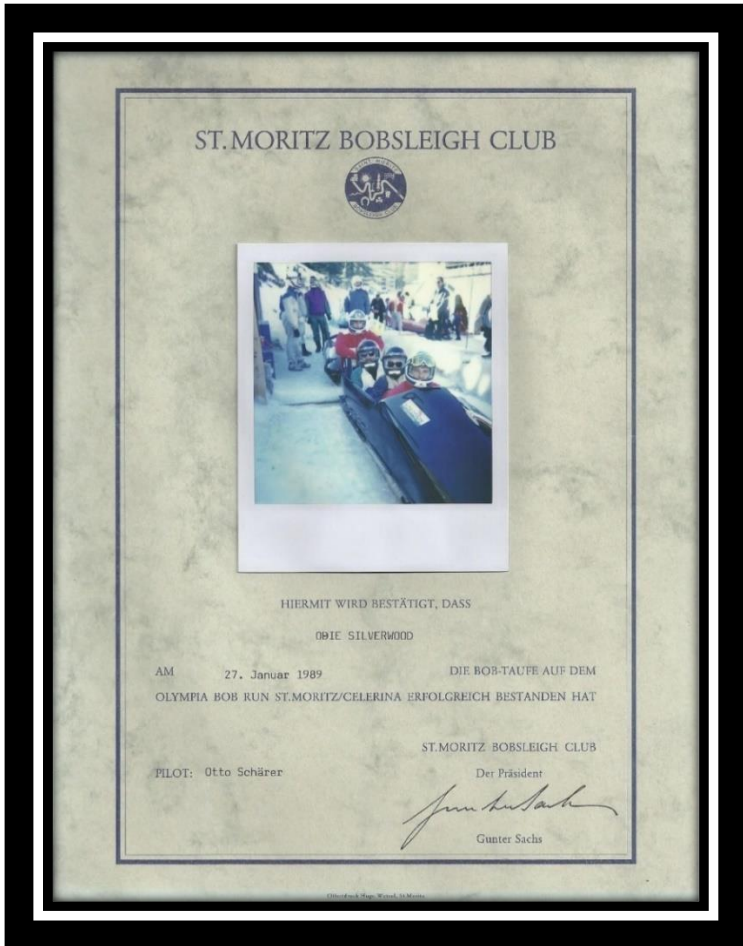
Chapter 9 – The Kulm Hotel on a snowy day.



Chapter 9 – That black dot is a rider, head first, on the Cresta Run at St. Moritz. Crazy!



Chapter 9 – Obie and Joy readying to run the four-man Olympic Bobsled course. Crazier!



Chapter 10: *Ritz-to-Ritz*

Nothing but fun! On a sunny summer afternoon Joy and I cruised our DB7 along California's central coast to the Ritz-Carlton Hotel at Half Moon Bay, California, where we were joined by eight fellow Aston Martin owners. After checking in we convened for cocktails at the Cork Wine Bar and discussed our rally that was planned for the next day.

That evening our group met for dinner in the hotel's Navio Restaurant, which had kindly seated us in a private dining room overlooking the Pacific's white water surf. Half Moon Bay is renowned for its giant waves at Mavericks Beach, which makes one think of the opening scene from *Die Another Day*, in which *Bond* rode such monsters – but those were filmed in Maui.

The next morning we assemble in front of the hotel and were joined by four more AE members. Our Astons, now six in number, then departed on a sporty tour which took us by the port city of Stockton and up into California's historic Gold Rush country, so named by the 1848 discovery of gold at "Sutter's Mill," which triggered a massive influx of amateur prospectors, adventurers and poor immigrants, all chasing the dream of gold and a better life.

At the town of Volcano, population 115, our convoy added two more Astons, where the fifteen of us enjoyed lunch at the old Union Inn Hotel. Volcano was so named in 1849 because it sits in a bowl-shaped valley, which the early miners thought was caused by a volcano. The Union Inn Hotel, built in 1880, though derelict at one time, was most recently reborn as a pub/bed and breakfast. The food - hamburgers, fries and such, washed down by cold beer - was scrumptious. The ambiance was charming and the service great.

From there our eight sleek Astons, in searing 100-degree heat, motored on up winding roads through Pine covered mountains to an elevation of 8,000 feet. Though the temperature gauges of the newer models never varied from center, the needle on my sixteen-year-old DB7 often approached "red" and I was relieved to see it inch back as we traveled downhill to the cooler air of Lake Tahoe, where we took a rest stop at the beautiful Emerald Bay overlook.

An hour or so later we arrived at the Ritz-Carlton Highlands Hotel, the deep throb our Aston exhaust pipes reverberating in the hotel's porte cochere. Positioned just above the ski village of Northstar and connected to it by a private gondola, the Highlands Ritz's architecture combines modern lines with a feeling of the outdoors.

Our suites were large and well appointed, with broad mountain vistas. And, after our long drive, we were delighted to find that the Ritz's management had graced each of us with a bottle of wine and a savory tray of *hors d'oeuvres*.

Refreshed, we reconvened on the hotel patio, its fire pit and river-rock stone-work in harmony with the surrounding forest. A couple of martinis later, *shaken-not-stirred* of course, we made our way to the hotel's *Manzanita Restaurant*, which had provided us a private dining room.

The next morning we assembled our Astons out front, took some photos, did our hugs and handshakes, then headed off for home. *James Bond* cars, lovely settings, delicious food and good friends – it was an occasion to remember!

Chapter 10 – Aston Martins arriving at the Half Moon Bay Ritz-Carlton Hotel.



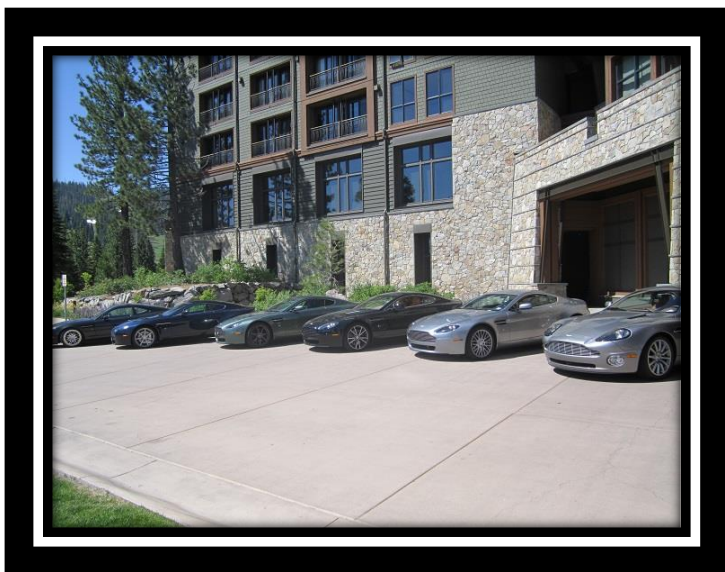
Chapter 10 – Our group's dinner at Half Moon Bay Ritz-Carlton Hotel



Chapter 10 – Arriving for lunch at the Union Inn Hotel in Volcano, California.



Chapter 10 – Our cars staged at the Lake Tahoe Ritz Carlton Hotel.



Chapter 11: *Gun Shots and Villains*

Like a magnet, my love of its *James Bond* ambiance kept drawing me back to St. Moritz. This time we were residing at its renown Badrutt's Palace Hotel, the great hall of which was once the haunt of European aristocracy, but the second world war brought big changes to the European social structure. Many royal families were unseated, ancestral estates and fortunes were lost. After the war, instead of earls and marquises, the Palace Hotel's tapestried parlor chairs were occupied by movie stars, nouveau riche, and café society.

I recall an interesting post-war Palace story in which it is said a rich American pulled-up in a taxi and saw a young man in a brass buttoned blazer casually standing by the entrance. "Hey, you there!" snapped the American, "...take my bags in," which the young man did. But, when the American tried to hand him a tip he refused to take it. "Why won't you take it?" the American asked. "Because I am the King of Yugoslavia," replied the young man, who had just been deposed by Marshal Tito.

The above tale reminds me of *Bond*, in *Casino Royale*, tying his shoelace in front of a Bahamas resort. A German tourist pulls up in a Range Rover, sees *Bond* and says, "Well, are going to just stand there or park my car?" He then throws the keys to *Bond*, who parks the car by smashing it into the railing, which hits the bumpers of a

whole row of cars, setting off their alarms, which *Bond* purposely did as a diversion to draw out the security personnel so he could get into the resort's security office without being seen.

The Alps surrounding St. Moritz are threaded together by a network of gondolas and chairlifts, creating one of the largest ski areas in the world. And, the sun and snow consistency make it one of the best. Though the Kulm and Palace hotels are wonderful, my only criticism is that neither are "ski-in, ski-out." You must walk or take the hotel car a couple of blocks to the Chantarella funicular that transports you up to the lifts, which, when carrying skis and boot bags, is inconvenient.

Joy has always hated the hassle of putting on ski boots. Actually, she's never really cared too much for skiing. She was hurt skiing on our honeymoon at Heavenly Valley, Lake Tahoe. One time she slipped while getting on the chairlift and, trying to catch her, I suspended her by her hair for a moment before dropping her. And, there was the time I lost control and ran into her on the hill, badly bruising her leg. A ski patrolman rushed over to help her and said, "Don't move, your leg might be broken – who are you with?" She pointed at me and he said, "You must be delirious, he's the one who hit you."

In spite of her dislike of the sport and her non-athleticism, over a period of three years I progressed her from never having skied to steeper and steeper slopes until finally, one day, having her follow me down the "Cornice" run at Mammoth Mountain, California. On that occasion, as we

stepped out of the gondola and put our skis on, I pointed to the Cornice in the distance and said, “See those people standing on the edge? They are probably crying. Don’t look at them and don’t look down the hill, just follow me over the precipice,” which she did, and made it all the way to the bottom without falling – which was good, because if she fell on that run, she would have fallen a very long distance. In reward I had a trophy made for her that read, “Mastered the Cornice, April 3, 1976, Congratulation Joy.”

So, back to this adventure on the St. Moritz slopes. We had taken the funicular up to the lifts and were in the Corviglia locker area putting on our ski boots. Struggling with the chore, Joy looked over at an older Italian woman (St. Moritz is quite close to the Italian border) sitting nearby and said, “I’m only doing this for him.” In response, the woman smiled and responded, “That’s *amore!*”

We skied a few runs and then took the gondola up to the restaurant at Piz Nair, which sits at 10,000 feet above the Engadin Valley. Sipping champagne and enjoying smoked salmon, we were literally looking out over the world – a breathtaking sight. One could safely speculate that *Blofeld’s* lair at Piz Gloria, which Ian Fleming created for his *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* novel, was inspired by Piz Nair and Fleming’s time in St. Moritz.

The next morning we arose, grabbed our cross-country skis and headed down to the lake, which was frozen over and covered with snow. We skied across to the other side, removed our gear, and trudged up a steep trail to a quaint restaurant adorned with flower stenciled shutters and

antlers mounted over the arch of its thick-planked entry door. While sitting on the patio, sipping hot chocolate topped with whipped cream, I observed a fellow easily skating up the trail on cross-country skis, both poles in one hand and a rope in the other pulling his young son on a sled. His nimbleness reminded me of the blond KGB assassin in *For Your Eyes Only*. I think one must be raised on skis to have such skill.

We then did a perimeter trek of the lake, taking in the lower *Bad* section of the village, after which we strolled the upper *Dorf* section. A must, when in St. Moritz, is to enjoy tea and pastries at Hanselmann's which we did that afternoon (The Palace Hotel and Hanselman's reminds me of the *Grand Budapest Hotel* and *Mendl's Patisserie*).

Running low on pocket money, we stopped at the Credit Swiss Bank branch and withdrew some *Francs* from our *numbered Swiss account*, which all good secret agents must have. We had opened the account a couple of years earlier to accommodate our frequent visits to Europe. Interestingly, most Swiss banks no longer allow Americans to have such accounts unless they reside in Switzerland.

That evening we took dinner at Chesa Veglia, which is the Palace's stubli (informal Swiss restaurant). Built in 1658, it exudes old world charm. Joy and I were seated by the piano player. She savored baked John Dory and I delighted in grilled veal. Glancing around the room I could only imagine the tales these walls could tell, having hosted such guests as Greta Garbo, Joan Collins, Yul Brenner, Joan Fontain, and Eleanor Roosevelt.

After dinner we retired to the Palace Bar, another venue rich in history. Many an evening its booths and tables had been occupied by Erich Remarque, Louis Bromfield, Henry Bernstein, Paulette Goddard, Harold Lloyd, Clara Bow, Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, Jeanette Macdonald and others of the rich and famous. Joy sipped her Grand Marnier and me, my brandy, as we bathed in the distinguished ambiance of this special room. Tomorrow would be an interesting day, viewing an international polo competition on the frozen lake surface.

Having fished the shores of Lake St. Moritz in the summer, I would never have imagined that it could freeze over thick enough to support the weight of hundreds of vehicles in the winter. Not just vehicles, but grandstands filled with spectators watching eight spiked hoof polo ponies thundering along, with their riders swinging mallets to drive an orange ball cross-field and through the goal posts – unbelievable!

Knowing we would be sitting outdoors and that it would be snowing, I had donned my full length beaver coat with a sheered mink hat and Joy looked elegant in her silver fox jacket and matching headband - there, it is common to see both men and women wearing furs. The Palace Hotel's limousine transported us, and another couple we had befriended, to the lake where we walked about taking in the spectacle. There were Rolls Royce, Moet Champagne and Cartier concession tents, and food vendors selling bratwurst, roasted chestnuts, cheeses and other Alpine delicacies. With a flute of bubbly in one hand and a plate of mustard bathed sizzling sausage in the other, we took

seats in the viewing stands and enjoyed the pre-game show, which included horse drawn skiers and an appearance by an Engadin Santa Clause, his leather backpack loaded with gifts, trekking along on ancient wooden skis.

The polo match, between south American and European teams, was exciting. We have attended regular polo matches on sod fields, but watching it played on snow was a unique experience. At one point I heard what I thought was the crack of a distant rifle shot. Glancing around, I made an interesting discovery. Sitting directly behind me was Kurt Jurgens, who had portrayed the villain, *Karl Stromberg*, in *The Spy Who Loved Me*. You might recall *James Bond* and Barbara Bach fought *Stromberg* in his underwater fortress.

On again hearing what sounded like a distant rifle shot I said aloud, “What was that?” Someone behind me, possibly Jurgens, knowingly answered, “That is the ice cracking.”

That evening, after cocktails and *hors d’oeuvres* in the Palace Hotel’s Kings Club, we attended a *Worldwide Fund for Nature Ball*, hosted by the St. Moritz Polo Club in the Embassy Room, where we were treated to a spectacular floorshow and gourmet dinner.

On ending our stay at the Palace, Mr. Hans Badrutt thoughtfully handed me a Grappa filled ski flask etched, “Bon Voyage, Badrutt’s Palace,” which I still treasure.

Chapter 11 – Obie and Joy cross-country skiing on Lake St. Moritz.



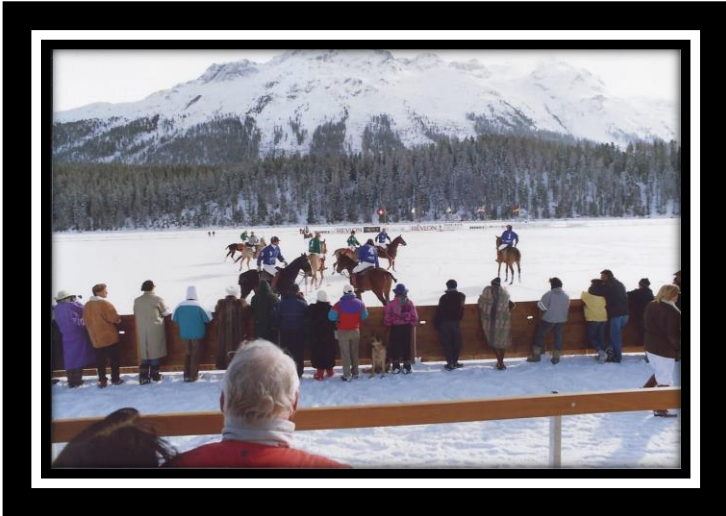
Chapter 11 – Dining at Chesa Viglia, the Palace Hotel’s stubli.



Chapter 11 – Joy and Obie on Lake St. Moritz, the Palace Hotel in background.



Chapter 11- Polo on Lake St. Moritz.



Chapter 11 – Kurt Jurgens, who played *Karl Stromberg* in *The Spy Who Loved Me*, sitting behind Obie.



Chapter 11 – Enjoying bratwurst at the Polo Match.



Chapter 11 – Joy, Obie and friend at the Polo Ball at the Palace Hotel.



Chapter 11 – Polo Ball announcement.



Chapter 11 – Grappa ski flask presented to Obie by Hans Badrutt, the owner of the Palace Hotel.



Chapter 12: *Oeufs a la Neige*

With fall in the air, four AE members joined Joy and me for a sojourn to the historic Ahwahnee Hotel in world renowned Yosemite National Park. Built in 1926 this magnificent stone structure embodies old world charm and rustic beauty. The hotel is named for the Indians that resided in this enchanted valley through which the Merced River runs, being fed by waterfalls that cascade thousands of feet down the sheer granite cliffs that line the valley floor.

On driving our Aston Martins into the Ahwahnee's *porte cochere* entrance we were greeted by valets who took our luggage and politely allowed us to park our own cars in a reserved area amid a stand of massive conifers. We were advised not to leave any food or drink items in our cars, lest the many black bears might rip off a door, trunk or hood to get at them.

That evening in the bar we were surprised to find a large fluffy tailed gray squirrel sitting below our table – wildlife in Yosemite is protected and roams freely amongst the many visitors. After cocktails we enjoyed the *haute cuisine* of the hotel's grand high-ceilinged dining room. At breakfast we were seated at the "Queen's Table" in the

“Alcove,” at which HRH Queen Elizabeth sat in her 1983 visit.

Our next day’s outing was a 70-mile drive through breathtaking granite canyons and tunnels that reverberated with the echoes of our accelerating Astons - reminiscent of the opening scene sounds in *Quantum of Solace* where *James Bond* in his Aston Martin races through similar mountain terrain to evade pursuing villains.

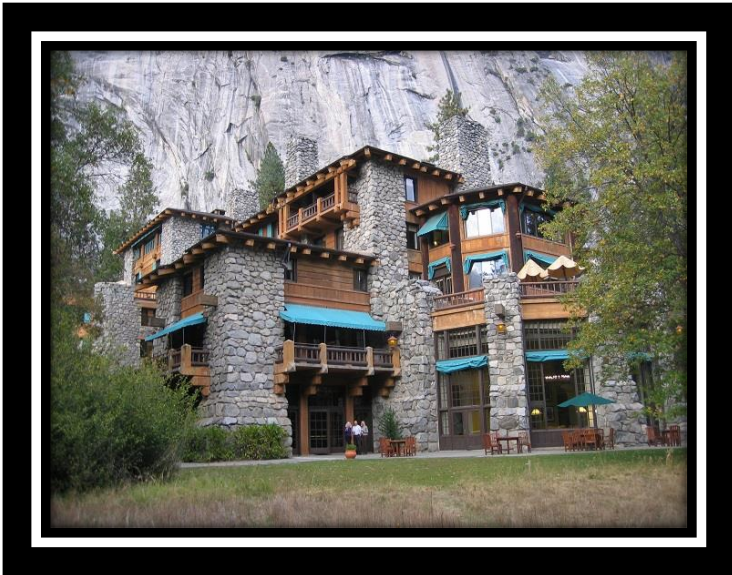
Winding uphill on the Tioga Road through snow covered peaks we arrived at the Tuolumne Meadows – at 8,600 feet, the largest sub-Alpine meadow in the Sierra-Nevada mountain range.

The hotel had prepared a sumptuous picnic lunch for us, which we enjoyed, *al fresco*, on the sandy shore of the crystal clear Tanaya Lake. The food, wine, conversation and views made an idyllic afternoon.

The return drive to the hotel was a bit sporty, occasionally abusing the posted speed limits and doing our best to avoid the radar equipped National Park Ranger patrols.

We took cocktails that evening in the elegant “Mural Room,” after which we had yet another night of fine dining. Upon my request, the chef prepared a special dessert of *Oeufs a la Neige*, which was a fitting finale’ to yet another 007 quality occasion.

Chapter 12 – Joy and friends by the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite.



Chapter 12 – Our Aston Martin group arriving at the Ahwahnee.



Chapter 12 – Dinner in the Ahwahnee's Grand Restaurant.



Chapter 13: *The Ferris Wheel*

James Bond in *The Living Daylights* escapes the KGB with *Kara Milovy*, riding her cello case down a ski slope into Austria, where he romances her on a Ferris Wheel in Vienna. So, naturally, Vienna was on my must-do 007 list.

Our adventure there began in Regensburg, Germany, boarding a luxury cruiser on the beautiful Danube river. As we proceeded east our first port was Passau, where we disembarked and walked the narrow streets of the Old Town. It was starting to rain, so we hurried under the covered patio of a restaurant, which was part of a two story 19th century hotel on the riverfront. A heavy waitress was standing there smoking a cigarette. I said, “Zwei bratwursts und biers bitte,” to which she nodded and left. We sat down and watched the passersby scurrying as the rain intensified, pouring off the edge of the overhead awning. A moment later, the portly server hurried through the door motioning to us and shouting, “Kommen sie, kommen sie, schnell!” As ordered, we quickly followed her in through the door, just as the awning - sagging at its middle with a foot of water - collapsed onto the patio where we had been sitting.

It was a delightful lunch and we laughed at the drenching we almost got. My last memory of the place was the woman emptying water from all the ashtrays on the patio.

On arriving in Vienna I did some fishing from the shore – I always carry a sectioned Trout rod and tackle when traveling. The ship purser said, with all the hundreds of passengers they handle, he had never seen anyone doing that. One of the ship's restaurant crew saw me and warned that I might be ticketed by the authorities. I told him I had brought my California fishing license and assumed I could use it to talk my way out of any citation, considering the impracticality of having to acquire a different license for each jurisdiction through which the boat passed. He said the Austrians were very strict on this and the fine would be about \$1,000, so that was the end of my fishing.

The next day we toured the Österreichische Galerie Belvedere museum in the Belvedere Palace, viewing a collection of art by Gustav Klimt, the most famous of which is *The Kiss*. Later, we visited the Naschmarkt (open air marketplace), which was a cornucopia of meats, cheeses, wines, vegetables and all other imaginable foods.

That evening, as Joy desired, we dined at the Bristol Hotel, which, since 1892, has hosted royalty and international dignitaries. It's Art Nouveau décor creates a wonderful ambiance of yesteryear. Classy and European, it is definitely a *James Bond* quality venue.

The next day we found our way to The Wiener Reisenrad (German for Vienna Giant Wheel) at the entrance of the Prater amusement park in Leopoldstadt. Constructed in 1897 it was the world's tallest extant Ferris wheel from 1920 until 1985.

James Bond had paid the wheel attendant to pause it, with he and *Kara Milovy* suspended at the top, so he could romance her in private. *Harry Lime* (Orson Welles) had done the same there in the 1949 film noir, *The Third Man*, so he could use the pause to threaten *Holly Martins* (Joseph Cotton). The theme from the movie, of the same name, was composed and performed by Viennese zither player, Anton Karas, which propelled him to world fame. He later opened a tavern in Vienna that was frequented by stars of the cinema, including Orson Welles and Kurt Jurgens, who played the role of the villain, *Karl Stromberg*, in *The Spy Who Loved Me* (also mentioned in Chapters 2 and 11).

Mission accomplished, we re-boarded our boat and continued on to Budapest – the story told in Chapter 1.

Chapter 13 – Obie at the Belvedere Palace, Vienna.



Chapter 13 – Obie and Joy dining at the Bristol Hotel,
Vienna.



Chapter 13 – The Vienna Ferris Wheel that *Bond* rode in *The Living Daylights*. (Photo by Bruno Dietl)



Chapter 13 – Was this the car in which *James Bond* romanced *Kara Milovy* or the one in which *Harry Lime* threatened *Holly Martins*? (Photo by Bruno Dietl)



Chapter 14: *The Dead Snake Hill Climb*

Wow - what a thrilling event! Our eleven competitors slugged it out over a challenging 26.3-mile road course that climbed from 1,900 to 5,260 feet, winding through oak covered foothills, traversing a pine scented National Forest, with a dizzying downhill final leg that was more like an amusement park ride than a public road. Amazingly, finish times of the fastest Aston Martin and fastest Porsche (which won) were separated by only 11 seconds.

The evening before the rally Joy and I had our Aston Elite friends to our country home for a champagne reception. Most were staying at the *Wonder Valley Ranch Resort* – California’s oldest “Dude Ranch,” which in the 1940’s and 50’s was a favorite escape for Hollywood movie stars such as Betty Hutton, Tom Mix, Victor McLaughlin, Roy Rogers, and many others, which leads to a minor diversion: In her youth, Joy’s family spent a week every summer at a Dude Ranch. Her younger brother, Dale, always liked the horses and wrangler. So, when he graduated from the University of California with a degree in psychology and was unable to find a job, he took a position assisting the wrangler at the Wonder Valley Dude Ranch. In 1972, when Joy and I were dating, she invited me up to Wonder Valley to meet Dale, hoping I might help convince him to return to the Los Angeles area. Well, I fell in love with

Wonder Valley and we ended up living just down the road from Dale. Actually, Dale is also instrumental in how I named this competition the *Dead Snake Hill Climb*. Years ago he was dating a country girl here who I had heard refer to this stretch of road as being, "...curvy as a dead snake drying in the sun."

Getting back to the race, the next morning we caravanned to the old mountain town of Dunlap, where the Twin Valleys Restaurant had kindly cordoned off its parking lot for us and provided a staging tent, table and cold bottled water. There, our six Aston Martins were joined by other friends driving three Porsches, a Corvette and a Ford Mustang GT.

After a registration and orientation meet, I led the group on a preview drive of the course, which commenced from the parking lot of the restaurant, left onto Dunlap Road, which was a thrill to drive as it radically curved and climbed up through beautiful oak and wildflower covered foothills. On reaching Highway 245, we entered the Sequoia National Forest and the terrain became Alpine, with waterfalls and towering conifers. We topped out at one-mile altitude at Highway 180 and started back down. Millwood Road – the *grand finale* – was unbelievable as it snaked down through breathtaking canyons. Very narrow and with no centerline, this section would require everyone's best driving skills.

On returning to the staging area, the cars were launched at nine minute intervals with each being timed on its individual run of the 26.3-mile course, the object being to see which could most quickly, safely and legally negotiate the hundreds of tight curves and occasional traffic.

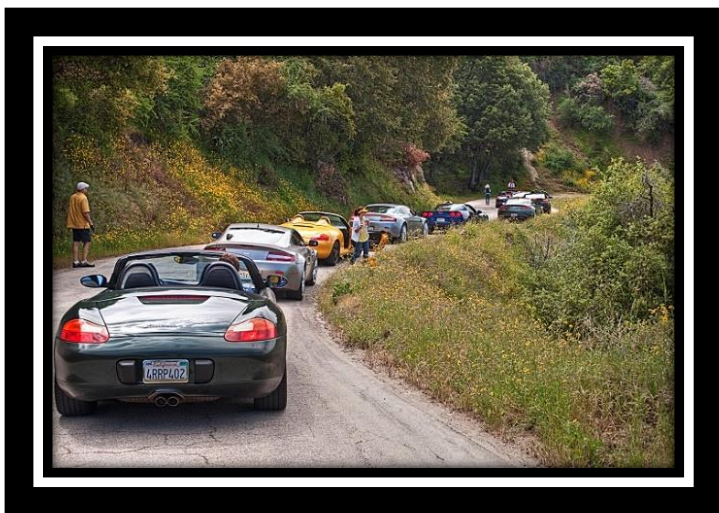
Each launch and return was punctuated by the sound of engines winding out and the smell of hot brakes. Perspiring adrenaline and grinning ear-to-ear, every driver emerged from his car with a story to tell. Pure fun was the essence of the day. Were *Bond* being chased by villains, he would have been challenged to outperform our band of racers.

With everyone safely back we settled into a nice lunch at the Twin Valleys Restaurant, hosted by Los Gatos Aston Martin. That evening we reconvened at the Cedar View Winery for a private tasting, *hors d'oeuvres* and award dinner. The fastest Aston Martin award went to Randy Hardcastle (35 minutes, 44 seconds). Los Gatos Luxury Cars also provided a gift certificate drawing for a two-day test drive of a new model Aston Martin, which was won by Randy Brewer.

Chapter 14 – The *Dead Snake Hill Climb* competitors.



Chapter 14 – The *Dead Snake Hill Climb* drivers previewing the race course.



Chapter 14 – Obie’s DB7 finishing the *Dead Snake Hill Climb*.



Chapter 14 – Obie presenting an award to fastest Aston Martin driver.



Chapter 15: *Totally Nude*

James Bond, in “*View to a Kill*,” fights *May Day* on the Eiffel Tower. Understandably, Joy and I had to trace those steps.

Our first consideration was where to stay in Paris, in *Bond* style? On recommendation, we selected the venerable Hotel de Crillon, at 10 Place de la Concorde. Commissioned by King Louis XV in 1758, the building was originally constructed as a palace. There, in 1778, Benjamin Franklin signed a treaty with France recognizing the Declaration of Independence of the United States. In 1788, it became the residence of the Count of Crillon, after whom the hotel was named.

Elegant in décor and comfortable in size, our two room suite was wonderful. We dined the first evening in the hotel’s formal restaurant, savoring the French cuisine. The next morning we crossed the street to the Louvre Museum and spent the day taking in the world’s grandest collection of art, including the *Mona Lisa* – there since 1797.

The Crillon’s concierge had made dinner reservations for us at La Tour d’Argent, a Paris “must do.” Pressed Duck a l’Orange is the restaurant’s specialty, and diners are presented a certificate with their duck number. Serial

number #112,151 went to U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt; #203,728 went to Marlene Dietrich; and #253,652 went to Charlie Chaplin. Ours was #674603.

As we entered the building we noticed some patrons waiting in the lobby. I provided our name to the receptionist, who escorted us up the elevator to the restaurant level where we saw yet more patrons waiting in an anteroom. Approaching the maître d's station, I was concerned we would be joining those waiting to be seated. To our delight, he immediately led us to a prime window table overlooking Notre Dame Cathedral and the Seine. I don't know if our special treatment was due to my black tie and white dinner jacket, which no one else was wearing; or to the radiant beauty of my bejeweled wife, Joy; or to the influence of the Crillon's concierge. I assume it was "Joy's beauty." Needless to say, it was a delightful evening – for which I later generously rewarded the concierge.

The next day we took a long walk along the Champs-Élysées, crossed the Seine and headed to the Eiffel Tower to find *Bond* and *May Day*. Built as the entrance to the 1889 World's Fair, the Eiffel Tower is the tallest structure in Paris. Feeling energetic, Joy and I climbed the 300 steps to the first level, then took an elevator to the second level where we enjoyed a gourmet lunch. The panorama was magnificent, giving a view of the arrondissement layout of the city. Considering the tower's 1,063 feet height, we could easily visualize *May Day's* parachute escape. Unfortunately, *Bond* was nowhere to be found.

In my youth I recalled seeing some old films in which Parisian cabaret entertainers performed what was called Apache Dancing, in which the man typically wore a beret and black and white striped shirt, and the woman wore a skirt slit up the side; and he would fling her about the floor. Assuming this was a traditional Parisian dance routine, I asked the Crillon's concierge to arranged seating for us at a good cabaret.

That evening the hotel car dropped us off at an establishment named *The Crazy Horse*. Though the name seemed odd and the exterior a bit glitzy, the interior was very nice and we were escorted to a front and center table at the edge of the stage. It appeared to be quite popular, as virtually every seat was filled.

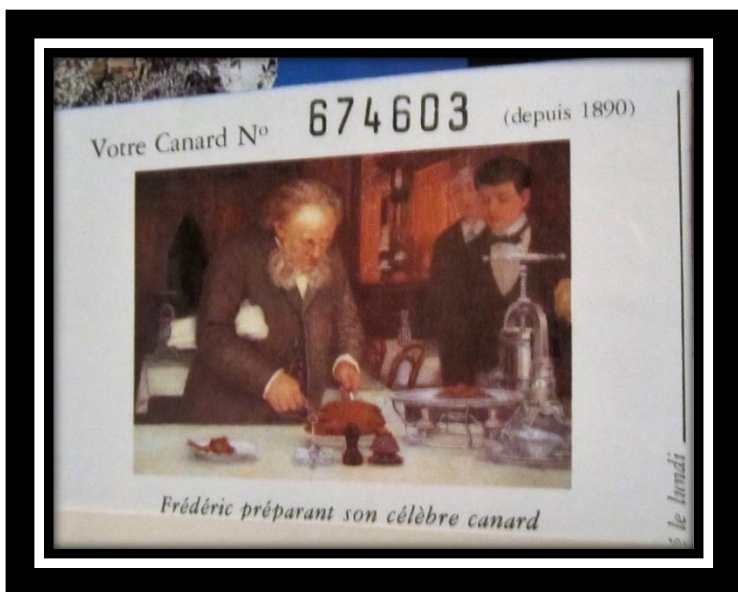
The curtain drew open and lights slowly elevated, revealing several absolutely beautiful women portraying a series of classic Greek goddess scenes that reminded us of Laguna Beach's *Pageant of the Masters* in which actors are made-up, costumed, posed and framed to recreate the great classic works of art. The only difference here was that these lovely young ladies were *totally nude*.

Feeling somewhat embarrassed we departed quickly and returned to the hotel, where I informed the concierge that was not what we had expected. He said it was a very renown burlesque, to which Joy corrected him, "No, that was not burlesque...in burlesque, dancers remove their clothing to music. These ladies had no clothes to remove."

Chapter 15 – Obie and Joy at the Hotel de Crillon, Paris.



Chapter 15 – Our Duck a l'Orange number at La Tour d'Argent, Paris.



Chapter 15 – Obie and Joy on the Eiffel Tower where *May Day* jumped-off in *View to a Kill*.



Chapter 16: *Supercars*

Has *James Bond* ever come to Fresno, California? No, and I doubt he ever will, but that did not dissuade me from staging a fun, *Bond* quality event there – *The Supercar Social*.

Joy and I live in the foothills of the Sequoia National Forest. Occasionally, we drive forty-five minutes to Fresno for a dinner at Fleming's Steak House, a well-appointed restaurant with excellent food and service. So, it occurred to me that this would be an ideal venue for a gathering of some supercar friends, *ala Bond*.

Scheduled for January 25th, rain had been forecast. That would have caused problems, because many of these special vehicles had never felt a drop of rain and the plan was to stage them for viewing in the valet parking area across the front of the restaurant. Fortunately, the gods smiled upon us and the evening was dry.

It was a sight to behold as each participant arrived, reminiscent of *Bond* pulling up to the Monte Carlo Casino in *GoldenEye*: Tim and Deanna Watson in their Aston Martin DB9 Vanquish; Randy and Chrissy Hardcastle in their Aston Martin V8 Vantage; Malcolm Ghazal in his Aston Martin DB9; Bruce and Debbie Eckert in their Lamborghini Galardo; Scott and Debbie Leonard in their Lamborghini Galardo; Jerry and Valerie Pieroni in their Ferrari F430; Jerry and Paula De Young in his 800 horse power Ford GT 40; Marve Rose in his Viper SRT-10; Fred and Pam Campbell in their Viper RT-10; Tom Nelson in

his Jaguar XKR; Ryan King and Chris Miles in his DeLorean; Tom and Jennifer St. Louis in their Maserati; Chris and Jill Plaunt in their Ferrari 328; and Joy and I in our Aston Martin DB7 – literally, millions of dollars in exotic vehicles.

Fleming's had dedicated a banquet room for our soiree, where Joy and I – me in black tie - greeted each guest. Champagne *and hors d'oeuvres* were served for the cocktail hour, after which all were seated and I introduced each person to the group and had him state the marque and model of his supercar.

Dinner was then served, surfeiting our pallets first with a winter greens salad, then filet mignon, garlic mashed potatoes, grilled asparagus and finishing with warm walnut, caramel-chocolate pie. Thereafter, we engaged in a contest to match twelve *James Bond* quotes to the corresponding movies, which was won by Randy Hardcastle, who received a first prize of a \$100 Fleming's gift certificate. Second place prize of a fine bottle of champagne went to Chris Miles, with third place prizes of Sports Car Price Guides going to Scott Leonard and Jill Plaunt.

After dinner, on a big screen, we enjoyed supercar race videos and a *James Bond* movie. It was a spectacular evening in *Bond style*.

Chapter 16 – Obie and Joy welcoming guests to the *Supercar Social*.



Chapter 16 – Supercars staged in front of Fleming's Restaurant in Fresno, California.



Chapter 16 – More Supercars



Chapter 16 – Supercar Social dinner menu.



Chapter 17: *Gilly Required*

When it comes to my pursuit of 007 fantasies, my lovely wife, Joy, is an enthusiastic enabler. This time she said, “We must go to the Kildare Club in Ireland,” because she had read that Sean Connery and Pierce Brosnan were regulars there. So, as *Bond* might do, we flew to London and checked-in to the venerable Savoy Hotel, which was one of Ian Fleming’s favorite haunts and which he mentioned in *Dr. No*, *For Your Eyes Only* and *Diamonds Are Forever*. Then, in *Bond* style, we visited Buckingham Palace and, that evening, dined at *The Ivy*, a London restaurant frequented by royalty and celebrities, where cell phones and cameras are forbidden and a dress code is enforced. Naturally, Joy could not allow us to leave London without her shopping at Harrods - as any good *Bond Girl* would. Those pleasantries done, we headed over to Pembroke for the ferry to Ireland.

The sea crossing was a bit rough, with massive rolling swells. There were many green faces onboard, including Joy’s. Returning from the restroom, she said, “That was a mistake...it’s worse in there.” Observing her condition, a nice English couple offered her some Dramamine, which helped. I’ve always had good sea legs, but just to play it safe I went to the bar for a stomach calming beer. The bartender, a red headed fellow with a thick brogue, asked what brand I preferred. Unthinkingly, I said, “Oh, any

good English beer will do,” to which he gruffly responded, “‘Ow’bout a gud ‘Irish’ beer?” to which, of course, I congenially agreed.

The Kildare Club, also known as the K-Club, is a magnificent 18th century chateau style manor house surrounded by two world class golf courses on which the *Ryder Cup* has been staged. As to Sean Connery’s golf interest, as he tells it, “I never had a hankering to play golf, despite growing up in Scotland just down the road from Bruntsfield Links, which is one of the oldest golf courses in the world. It wasn’t until I was taught enough golf to look as though I could outwit the accomplished golfer Gert Frobe in *Goldfinger* that I got the bug. I began to take lessons on a course near Pinewood film studios and was immediately hooked on the game. Soon it would nearly take over my life.”

Check-in went smoothly and we were delighted to find ourselves placed in the Ambassador’s Suite. The décor and furnishings were elegant and Joy was especially pleased with the spacious bath and dressing rooms. That evening we dined at the resort’s Michelin rated restaurant, *Byerly Turk*, at which I made my second *faux pas* of the day by telling the maître d’ we were truly enjoying the British Isles. On hearing that, he furled his brow and retorted, “This is the Republic of Ireland, not the British Isles!” I apologized and told him I was one forth Irish, McGahan, on my maternal grandmother’s side, which seemed to settle him and assure that we would be eating.

Unlike Mr. Connery, I do not play golf. But fortunately the K-Club estate is bisected by the River Liffey and the golf courses are dotted with large ponds, all of which sport Trout - and I am an avid fisherman. So, in the morning I unpacked my light weight casting gear and proceeded to the front desk for directions to the most opportune fishing spots. There, I was informed that if one wishes to fish on the estate, a *Gilly* is *required*, and “spinning gear” is not allowed. That afternoon I was introduced to my *Gilly*, a gray haired gentleman with a weathered face, wearing a flat tweed cap, green field coat and heavy woolen pants. He dressed me out in rubber boots, handed me a fly-rod and loaded us into a golf cart. Carefully maneuvering the links so as not to interrupt play, he took me to a large pond that was surrounded by reeds and occupied by two white nesting swans, which did not appear happy to see us. Nonetheless, on virtually every cast my fly was taken by a leaping Rainbow Trout. What fun!

I prefer stream or river fishing to lake fishing, so I asked the *Gilly* if we could give the river a try, at which he looked a bit reluctant. Fly casting at lakeside is pretty easy, because there are no rapids with which to deal, but stream or river fishing takes a bit more skill. The shore of the River Liffey was pretty heavily vegetated and ran at a medium speed along a statue lined path bordering the chateau’s spacious green lawn. We picked a spot along the grassy bank that had fewer low tree limbs. On my second cast upstream a dark swirl appeared in the water, the fly went under and my line drew taut. Keeping a good bend to the pole, I gently played the fish to shore, where, in one

swift move, the *Gilly* netted it. “A beautiful German Brown!” he exclaimed and allowed me to hold it just long enough to snap a photo, then eased it back into the depths as he had done with each fish that day. No, I certainly did not miss playing golf, though it would have been fun to shoot a round with Sean, Pierce or *Goldfinger*.

While over there, I also wanted to try some Salmon fishing in Sean Connery’s native land, Scotland. So, a couple of months earlier I had written to HRH the Prince of Wales to see if I might cast a line with him on the River Dee, should he be at Balmoral then. Fortunately, Joy caught the letter before it was posted, saving me yet a greater *faux pas* – she noticed that I had misaddressed it to “The Prince of Whales.” As it turned out, Prince Charles was not available, but did send a kind note wishing me well. My fishing in Scotland did not prove as fortuitous as in Ireland, but it did provide the opportunity to see Galashiels, the birthplace of my paternal grandmother, Maggie Nichol Greig, which was only 32 miles from Edinburgh, where Sean Connery was born. Of interest, on our drive from the ferry landing at Hollyhead to Galashiels I spotted a truck on the highway donning my family name, *Silverwood*, which is Old English in origin.

Chapter 17 – Joy at the gate to Buckingham Palace – a little larger than our gate (see photos of Chapter 24).



Chapter 17 – Obie at the Kildare Club, Ireland – frequented by Pierce Brosnan and Sean Connery – of *Bond* fame.



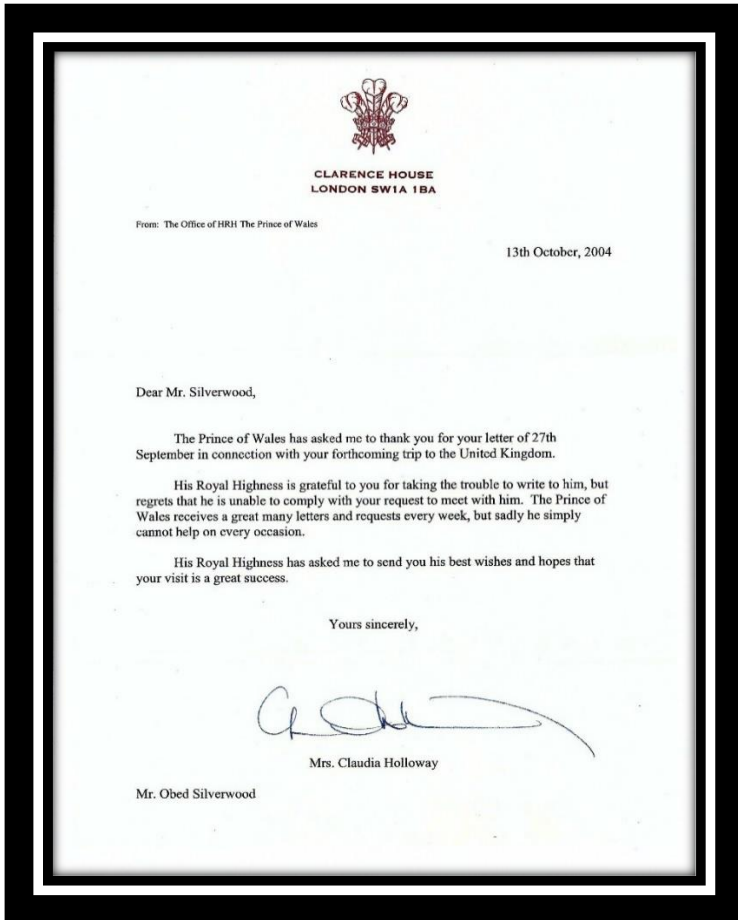
Chapter 17 – Our Ambassador’s Suite in the K-Club.



Chapter 17 – Obie with Brown Trout he caught on the River Liffey – yes, he released it.



Chapter 17 – Letter from HRH Prince Charles to Obie. I guess we won't be fishing together.



Chapter 17 – Silverwood truck in England.



Chapter 18: 007 Watches and Ronald McDonald

Our group of twenty-nine Aston Martin owners convened on a Friday afternoon in late June at the luxurious Fairmont Mission Inn in Sonoma, California – wine country. That evening in the Harvest Suite we partook of vodka martinis, shaken-not-stirred, as two representatives of the Swiss Watch Company (Swatch) laid out a beautiful leather case, embossed with the numbers, “007,” and a wood munitions box, stenciled in black with the word, “Danger.” One of the Swatch staff worked the combination locks on the leather case and unlatched it as the other did the same to the munitions box, then they paused. Our curiosity heightened, they opened both simultaneously to reveal two limited edition sets of unique timepieces: the leather case possessed twenty watches based on the names of the *James Bond* movies, and twenty-two more in the munition box, based on *Bond* movie villains.

A *Goldfinger* gentleman’s watch and an *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* lady’s watch were then gifted to two lucky persons by a blind drawing of our names. As coincident would have it, I won the gentleman’s watch. Though I was part of the group and just as eligible to win the watch as anyone, the fact that I had arranged the entire event created a bit of awkwardness for me. There were several shouts of

“fixed,” all made in jest, of course. Still, I did feel somewhat odd, but not so much as to give-up my winning. In a token effort to demonstrate that I had not rigged the drawing, I purchased the entire leather case collection. Had Joy won the lady’s watch, there would have been no getting out of the room alive – even for *Bond*.

Though I have enjoyed wearing the *Goldfinger* watch on occasion, it is not really my style – it is so large and heavy, *Bond* could probably have beaten *Oddjob* to death with it.

Saturday morning we assembled in the hotel’s underground garage, a portion of which had been thoughtfully cordoned off for our special cars. You can just imagine the echo effect of firing-up fourteen Aston Martins in that enclosed area. It was thunderous and spectacular!

Joy and I led the way to our first venue of the day, Imagery Winery, which provided us a private tasting of their selections. This winery, to adorn its fine wines, had a label art collection in which each featured a portion of the Parthenon.

Next, we were off to Landmark Winery, which was owned by the John Deere tractor family. Bruce McKay, the winery’s marketing director, arranged shaded parking for our cars, a wine tasting under the trees and an informal concours. Bruce, a Brit, had been judging sports car concours’ for twenty years and his own cars had never placed less than third. After carefully examining our cars, he awarded a winery gift basket to Brad Shafer for his

uncommon and beautiful DB7 GT Vantage – Brad’s family also owns a winery.

Our next stop was the Kenwood Restaurant for lunch, where I had reserved a private room. By now, outdoor temperatures had reached 104 degrees and people were starting to wilt, particularly after all those vodka martinis the previous evening. I actually thought, at one point, I was going to pass-out. Thank goodness the restaurant was air conditioned, which, along with some cold water to the face, had me back in form.

After lunch we drove on to the B.R. Cohn Winery, which was owned by the manager of the *Doobie Brothers*. Again, we had a private tasting and more lovely wine.

We then returned to the Fairmont for a cold shower and reassembled in the hotel’s fine dining restaurant, *Sante’s*. There, in the private “Bottle Room,” Marin Luxury Autos treated us to a champagne reception. Vince Betar, Marin’s sales manager, had been with us for the day, driving a new Aston Vantage V8 Roadster. After libations, we enjoyed a delightful dinner, with a few retiring to the poolside for cigars and brandy.

Sunday morning we headed off on winding country roads to find the Glen Lyon Winery, which is open to the public by appointment only. This winery is owned by Squire Fridell, a very successful television actor with more than 3,000 commercials to his name, including a seven-year advertisement run portraying the popular restaurant clown, *Ronald McDonald*. Squire’s wife, Suzy McDermaid, was

an accomplished dancer, with whom Joy had attended high school.

During a previous visit to their winery they had prepared an al fresco dinner for Joy and me and some other friends. One, an avid hunter, had brought Mallard Duck sausages, which Squire had barbecued. Piled high and sizzling, he had placed the large platter on a low brick wall to cool. A few moments later he went to fetch the sausages and found they were gone. “Where are the sausages?” he yelled to us. It was at that point we saw his Australian Shepherd dog waddling by, licking its chops.

Squire put on quite a show for our Aston group. He walked us through the production facility, explained his wine making process and treated us to a tasting on their patio overlooking the vineyards. It was a nice finish to a delightful weekend.

Unfortunately, the weather that day was, again, very hot and our cars had been parked in the sun. I had two cases of wine in the trunk of my DB7 and by the time we got home red juice was bubbling out around the corks.

Chapter 18 – Joy at the entry of the Fairmont Mission Inn in Sonoma, California, for our Aston club meet there.



Chapter 18 – *James Bond* villain themed watches presented over cocktails.



Chapter 18 – Joy with the *James Bond* watch set we purchased (also see Chapter 27).



Chapter 18 – The *Goldfinger* watch Obie won.



Chapter 18 – Our cars under cover at the Landmark Winery.



Chapter 18 – Lunch at the Glen Lyon winery. Yes, that's the dog that ate the platter of sausages.



Chapter 19: *Chased by Blofeld – I wish*

As the old saying goes, any airplane landing from which you can walk away is a good one. The same might be said about any day of skiing. Unfortunately, it does not always work that way.

Gstaad is a village of snow covered gingerbread houses nestled in the Swiss Alps. It draws skiers, celebrities and *bon vivants* from around the world. Most important, Roger Moore, of *James Bond* fame, lived there. So, of course, it ranked high on my 007 “must do” list.

A hiss of compressed air and slight metallic screech eased the train to a stop. Our car bore the words “*Erste Klasse*” stenciled in gold against the coach’s forest green body. As we stepped down to the platform a porter in black livery approached and took our carry-on bags. Walking through the station we passed two boys sitting on a luggage cart, playing accordions and yodeling.

The porter led us to a waiting limousine. After a short drive we entered the *porte-cochere* of the Palace Hotel, checked-in and were shown to our suite. Our primary luggage, which had been freighted ahead from our hotel in St. Moritz, had been unpacked - our items neatly placed in drawers, my suits, Joy’s furs and dresses in the closets, toiletries in the bath.

Most fine hotels in European resorts take guests on a *demi-pension* plan in which dinner and breakfast are included in your room charge, with dinner being served each evening, haute cuisine, in the hotel's grandiose main dining room – the “restaurant.” Gentlemen are expected to wear a dark suit and tie, or tuxedo, which, in Europe, is referred to as a “smoking.” Reservation protocol is taken seriously, so I had booked our preferred dinner hour several weeks in advance. But having arrived later than planned, we were off schedule. By the time we showered and dressed, we had missed our reserved seating time in the restaurant and decided to take a late meal in the hotel's Grill Room, a slightly more casual setting. After being seated I inquired of the captain, “Do you often see Roger Moore here?” “Yes,” he answered and pointed to tables where Elizabeth Taylor, Paul McCartney and other celebrities often sat. The next evening in the main dining room I sensed some scolding looks from the *maître d'*. On inquiry I learned he had held a special table open for us the entire previous evening. I apologized profusely and assured him it would not happen again.

In the morning I was off to Wispile Mountain to ski while Joy did the spa. It was a sunny day, the snow was good and my first few runs were delightful. Exploring the hill, I decided to employ my, “What would *Bond* do?” philosophy by skiing a little faster than I should have, with the intent of impressing two lovely young ladies who had been tracking along behind me. Well, as I deserved, I lost control and caught the tip of one ski on a large mogul. My binding did not release, but my cartilage did. Rising to my

feet, I immediately knew I was in trouble – I could feel bone-against-bone in my right knee. I looked around. The girls, of course, were long gone. I waited a bit hoping for a passing ski patrol, but no such luck.

The basic technique of Alpine skiing is to traverse back and forth across the ski run, which is accomplished by weight transfer and ski edge control. Left turns require a greater weight transfer to the inside edge of your right ski, and right turns require a greater weight transfer to the inside edge of your left ski. Now, because my damaged right knee could not take any pressure, I found myself unable to make left turns. So, to progress down the hill, I slowly traversed left, then made a right turn with no problem and traversed across the hill to the right. Unable to turn left I had to stop, lie down on my right side, roll onto my back, flip my skis over to the opposite direction, stand up and travers to the left again. I repeated this arduous routine for about a mile until reaching the bottom of the hill. Surprisingly, I did not encounter another soul the entire way down. Actually, the only sign of life I encountered was some cattle residing in the under-barn of an old hillside “burehus” chateau.

I waived down a taxi which took me to the local doctor, a nice fellow who did not speak much English. He held my lower right leg in both hands and moved it around, showing me how loose the knee joint now was, compared to the left knee. Yes, he said, the cartilage was torn and maybe some ligaments, but there was nothing he could do other than bandage it.

Returning to the hotel on crutches, I was embarrassed explaining to Joy what had happened. I would prefer to have claimed I had fallen trying to out-run *Ernst Stavro Blofeld* and his gang, as had *Bond*, portrayed by George Lazenby, in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*.

William F. Buckley, Jr. was another famous Gstaad *habitué*. I thought he might find my skiing experience there interesting, so I wrote to him. His kind response letter is a prized possession, framed and occupying a prominent spot on my office wall. His simple retort was, "My goodness! You should give Gstaad another chance."

Mr. Buckley was also a regular at Alta, Utah, a resort that Joy and I frequented for many years - which leads to another story: *The Melee*.

Alta can be summed up in two word: "powder skiing." The altitude and temperature produce some of the lightest snow on earth. There is nothing as much fun as schussing down a fresh slope in knee deep powder.

I don't recall the exact year, but lift tickets were about \$7 then. After a morning on the hill, Joy and I were eating lunch at the restaurant at the bottom of the lifts when a tall, husky young man in a colorful, full body, zip-up ski suit entered. He put some money in a vending machine, which apparently was not working properly. So, he started kicking and denting it with his heavy ski boot. The grey haired restaurant manager, probably in his fifties - which at that time I considered old - came over and asked him to stop. A heated argument ensued and big Mr. Ski Suit

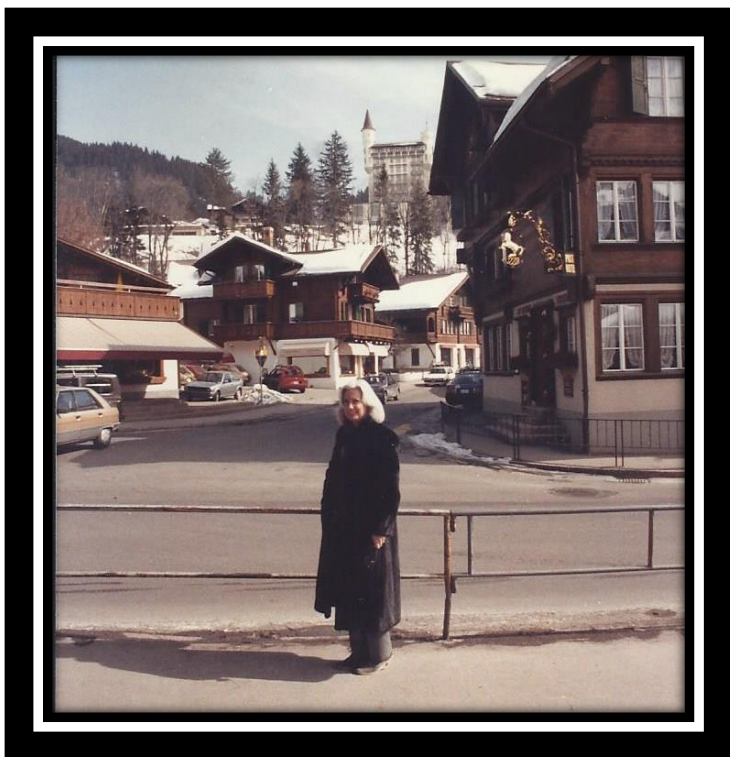
shoved the manager, almost knocking him down. At that, the cook, a slender kid wearing a baseball cap, hopped out from behind the counter and got toe-to-toe with Mr. Ski Suit. The cook stood about 5'6" and Mr. Ski Suit towered over him by at least a foot, so the cook was pretty much looking straight up as he shouted, "Why don't you pick on someone your own size?" At that, Mr. Ski Suit cleared his throat and spit down into the cook's face. The little cook retaliated with a punch to the larger man's face and a full-on fight commenced. When the manager tried to break it up, two of Mr. Ski Suit's buddies jumped the manager. Then the restaurant patrons started joining the fray. Tables, plates and plastic chairs were flying. Instinctively, I started rising to my feet, as did the fellow seated across from me. Almost in unison, his wife and Joy placed their respective hands on our shoulders and pulled us back down into our seats – thank goodness. At that point, an older barrel-chested fellow who looked like Wallace Berry waded into the thick of it and started throwing roundhouses, leveling Mr. Ski Suit and his buddies.

Every time we skied Alta thereafter I always asked at the restaurant, "Remember the Melee?" As to what *Bond* might have done? I'm not sure, but I'm glad Joy put her hand on my shoulder.

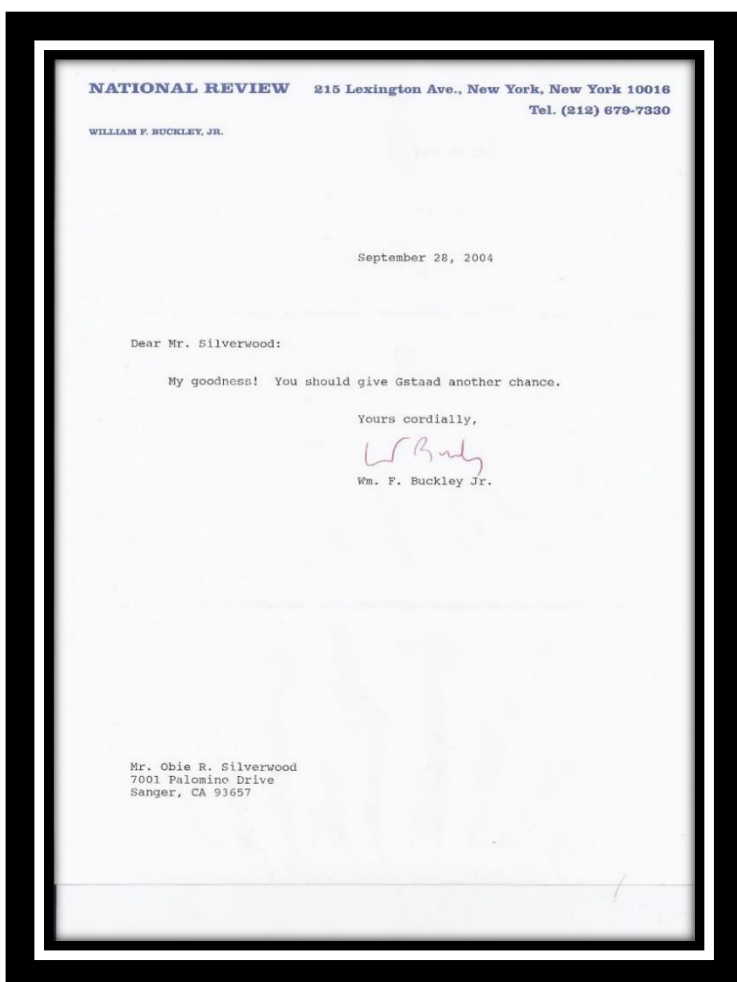
Chapter 19 - The train to Gstaad, two young Swiss boys singing.



Chapter 19 – Joy with the Palace Hotel in the background at Gstaad, where Roger Moore lived.



Chapter 19 - Letter from William F. Buckley, Jr.,
regarding Gstaad.



Chapter 19 – Obie skiing at Alta, Utah (Photo by Larry Cox)



Chapter 19 – Alta lift ticket, yes - \$6.50.



Chapter 20: *Iced Martinis ala Bond*

The *Aston Martin Motorsports Festival* at Laguna Seca Raceway - what a great time for the Aston owners and hundreds of others who experienced this first ever race track spectacular hosted by Le Mans champion Kevin Buckler, his “The Racers Group” (TRG) and Aston Martin Corporation.

As *Murphy’s Law* would have it, my DB7 died at roadside the morning we arrived. At Joy’s wise suggestion, we had the car towed to the race track where I asked Kevin Buckler if his mechanics could try to fix it. On investigation they determined the gas tank would have to be pulled to repair a fuel pump, which would take a couple of days to do, considering that they were busy servicing their race cars.

I had the privilege of being on the planning committee for this special event and the honor of being asked to lead a Grand Finale’ Tour, for which I now needed a car to drive. So, I explained my dilemma to Julian Jenkins, the President of Aston Martin of the Americas, who smiled, reached into his pocket and handed me the electronic key to a new \$200,000 Aston Martin DB9, and said, “It’s yours for the weekend.” Wow, what a guy!

That Friday evening, attired in my *James Bond* white dinner jacket and black tie, with Joy on my arm, we attended a Gala at the track’s Red Bull Center where

singer-songwriter, Al Stewart, (“Year of the Cat”) entertained. At the bar, vodka martinis, shaken-not-stirred, sluiced into our glasses via an artistic ice carving, and Kevin’s Adobe Road Winery plied us with tasty Zins and Chardonnays. The food was spectacular, with such selections as garlic mashed potatoes served in martini glasses and anointed with beef stroganoff.

The next morning Aston Martin staged test drives of new models, one being from the “Q” branch. Lunch was served in the VIP suites overlooking the track, providing great viewing of the GT4 Challenge, a competition between gentlemen racers, sponsored by Pirelli Tires and TRG. Later in the day, the Festival Grand Marshal, Indy Car legend, Danny Sullivan, took to the track and led Aston Martin owners on some hot laps. TRG’s race team also took willing passengers on full speed GT3 and GT4 laps, imbedding smiles that probably required surgical removal. That evening there was a spectacular celebrity chef, wine-maker’s dinner staged by TRG at the nearby Pasadera Country Club.

On the final morning I assembled about fifty Aston Martin owners at the Spanish Bay Resort and led them on a tour of the famous *17 Mile Drive* through beautiful Pebble Beach and Carmel, then up Carmel Valley and over the Monterey mountain range back to Laguna Seca, where we merged on to the race track and did some spirited laps - our stomachs dropping as we dove downhill maneuvering turn eight’s infamous “Corkscrew.” Observing the countless skid marks as we accelerated around the course, I joked to Joy, “I hope we don’t create any new ones.”

I downshifted the new DB9, signaled and led the concourse of Astons off the track and into the paddock parking area where TRG had staged champagne and *hors d'oeuvres*. We exited our beautiful *James Bond* cars and joined together in a final toast to our wonderful weekend.

Chapter 20 – Obie, *ala Bond*, by car #007 at the *Aston Martin Festival* in Monterey.



Chapter 20 – *24 Hours of Le Mans* champion, Kevin Buckler (center), with his TRG Aston Martin race team.



Chapter 20 – Race car driver, Derek De Boer and wife at the Gala's carved ice martini bar.



Chapter 20 – Aston Martins staged for Obie to lead them onto the Laguna Seca Race Track.



Chapter 20 – Aston Martin of the Americas President, Julian Jenkins, who came to Obie’s aid.



Chapter 21: \$1,600 Dinner

Ian Fleming had stayed at the Paris Ritz Hotel, so it is not surprising that in his novel, *From Russia With Love*, he had *James Bond* go there to meet *SMERSH* agent, *Rosa Klebb*, who tried to kill him with her poison tipped knitting needles – in the movie she used a poison tipped shoe. Naturally then, the Ritz was another *007* must-do for Joy and me, and to make it special we scheduled our visit for New Year's Eve.

Having arrived a couple of days early for the occasion, we wanted to see some spots missed on previous stays there - one being the former home of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. It had been my understanding that after their deaths Mr. Al Fayed had purchased and maintained it as somewhat of a museum. So, I wrote to him asking if we might tour it, to which he had kindly replied that would not be possible, because it was now a private residence. He did, though, wish us well for our planned visit to his hotel, The Ritz.

Day one we ventured down into Paris's subway system and purchased tickets to Versailles. It is amazing what some will do to save paying a fare. Just as I was passing through the ticket turn-style a young Asian girl crammed in with me, enabling herself to pass through without a ticket – fortunately, she was not also a pick-pocket.

At the end of the rail line we boarded a shuttle to the Chateau de Versailles, which is one of those sites that overwhelm the senses. It is difficult to imagine that people lived in such grandeur. It was well worth the *tube* ride to see it.

After touring the Palace and gardens, we walked to the nearby village and had lunch at *Le Limousin*, a landmark bistro with old style service and cuisine. While dining we met a young French couple who later walked us around the streets pointing out interesting sites, such as the building in which the original conspirators first met to plan the French Revolution.

The next day we stopped by the Paris Aston Martin dealership to see new models, then walked a short distance to the Plaza Athena Hotel and enjoyed a glass of champagne in its Grand Hall. For lunch, recommended by the Aston dealer, we ate at the very *chic L'Avenue Restaurant*, which was located just across from Christian Dior. A classy brassiere with magnificent food and popular amongst the jet-set, it was definitely of 007 quality. That evening we dined at a restaurant with a striking view of the Eiffel Tower, aglow in colored lights continuously changing in pattern.

Now, as to our \$800/person New Year's Eve black tie dinner at the Ritz. Yes, it is an impressive hotel. The service was good and there were many tasty courses of food and wine, and some nice entertainment, but I did not feel it was worth \$1,600. At least we did not have to fight-

off *Klebb*'s poison tipped knitting needles, as did *Bond* on his visit.

Later, while we were being whisked through the city in the Ritz's limo, *Princess Di* came to mind. Joy had been an ardent admirer of the Princess and maintains an extensive library on her and the royal family. Di's tragic death was such an unfortunate loss.

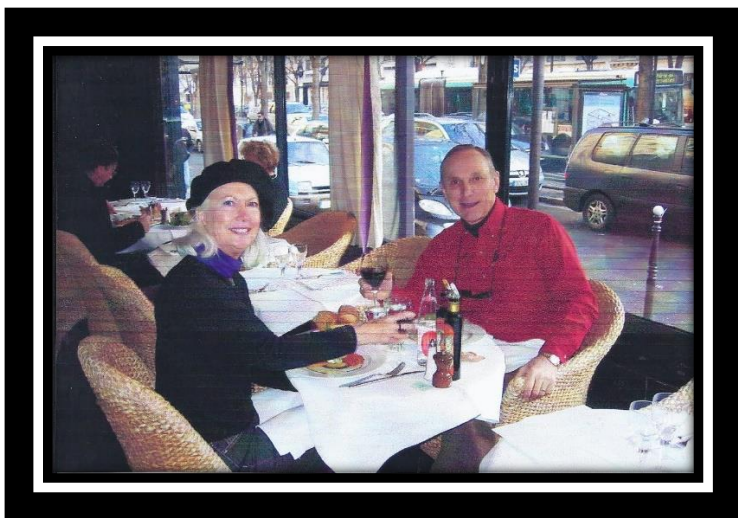
Chapter 21 – Letter to Obie from Mr. Mohamed Al Fayed, owner of the Paris Ritz and father of Dodi Al Fayed, who died in a car accident with Princess Diana in a Paris tunnel.



Chapter 21 – Obie and Joy at the Paris Aston Martin dealership.



Chapter 21 – Having lunch at the very *chic* *L'Avenue* Restaurant.



Chapter 21 – Obie and Joy in the lobby of the Paris Ritz Hotel, on their way to be seated for New Year’s Eve dinner.



Chapter 21 – New Year's Eve dinner menu, Paris Ritz,
December 31, 2008. 650 Euros equaled \$800 at that time.



Chapter 22: *Aston Martin Wins!*

Attending the *24 Hours of Le Mans* in France is a “must do.” I was looking forward to it, theoretically, but my enthusiasm was dampened by the thought of crowded airports, a 12-hour flight and nine-hour time difference. Joy, said, “You’re not getting younger, so do it now.” And, thus began the ritual of standing in lines, taking off shoes and belts, being x-rayed and having my hat crushed in the overhead bin by someone’s big black carry-on.

About two hours into the flight the stewardess came by with a beverage cart and I asked for a beer. As I withdrew some money from my pocket she said, “There’s no charge.” It was then I started having fun. A few beers later, we were over France’s quilt-work of farms, forests and villages, and descending for touchdown at Charles De Gaul.

After a good night’s sleep we joined our group in the morning at the airport Sheraton Hotel. The tour director, Steve Cole, was a tall, slim Texan, sporting a white handlebar mustache, and he clearly knew his business. Within minutes the forty of us were comfortably seated on a first class charter bus heading for the town of Tours. Halfway there we stopped at a petrol/bistro turnout, where, to our surprise, the buffet entrees, desserts and wines were magnificent. Oh, the French!

We arrived early afternoon at the lovely old world Hotel L'Universe, which had been nicely refurbished to Four Star standards. That evening we enjoyed a tour reception with an endless flow of delicious French *hors d'oeuvres* and wines at which Steve and his wife, Angie, presented our race tickets and information packages.

The next morning we were transported to Le Mans and familiarized with our track-side hospitality tent, which featured a bar, sit-down restaurant, snack counter, multiple big screen TV's, couches, private grandstand viewing and, most import (according to Joy), very nice restrooms. Conveniently, the Aston Martin hospitality quarters were just next door, where Warren Jones, one of my Aston Martin Racing acquaintances, welcomed Joy and me in for a tour.

We had arranged to meet David Lewington, the *AM Quarterly* Magazine Editor-in-Chief, and Richard Loveys, a Publishing Board member, at the entrance to the track's Automotive Museum. Having not met in person before, my concern about finding them was soon allayed as I spotted a green and white Aston Martin standard waving high atop a pole carried by Richard, weaving his way through the crowd. After exchanging greetings, we strolled the track with David and Richard, both seasoned Le Mans spectators, who kindly advised us on the best viewing points.

The competition now underway, we enjoyed watching Aston Martin's car #97 lead the GTE Pro class and #95 lead the GTE Am class. That evening our group had a

wonderful dinner at the *Welcome*, a classy track-side restaurant. Though some chose to remain the entire night watching the race, Joy and I opted for the bus back to our hotel, which returned us to the track in the morning to continue our viewing.

Having done much walking the first day, our plan for day two was to head for our hospitality tent, grab a table in front of the big screen TV and spend the day there drinking champagne, eating French food and occasionally stepping out onto the private viewing area to watch the cars roar by.

In the afternoon we were joined by Richard and David, who helped us polish off another bottle of champagne. Then, with about fifteen minutes remaining in the race, they took us by the arms and led us through the crowds, along secret routes, through tunnels, around fences and onto the track just as the checkered flag fell. Encased in a sea of humanity, David and Richard herded us along until we were directly below the awards stand, where, in a mist of champagne spray, we watched the Aston Martin car #95 race team receive first place trophies for their class. *Bond* would have loved it!

Aston Martin's win was both spectacular and poignant, considering that its team driver, Allen Simonsen, was killed the previous year driving car #95 in the *24 Hours of Le Mans*. At high speed he had suffered the unfortunate luck of crashing into the guard rail just where it was up against a tree trunk. Normally, the guard rail would have bent to cushion the hit, but because of the tree there was no give to absorb the impact.

Preferring to do our own travel planning, Joy and I have always avoided “tours,” but we were very pleased with this one. Steve Cole and his wife are true professionals and it was relaxing to have everything coordinated for our convenience. And, we had fun with the people in our group, some from Canada, South Africa, Singapore, France, Australia, and all over the U.S. One couple, Charles and Donna Wilson, generously shared their dynamic and colorful race photos for this tale.

Chapter 22 – Obie and Joy at the *24 Hours of Le Mans* with David Lewington, the *AM Quarterly* Magazine Editor-in-Chief, and Richard Loveys, a Publishing Board member.



Chapter 22 – Car #95, the Aston Martin winner in its class.



Chapter 22 – A sea of humanity at the *24 Hours of Le Mans*.



Chapter 22 – Aston Martin race team receiving their first place trophies, champagne about ready to fly.



Chapter 23: *Where is First Class?*

James Bond was created by Ian Fleming's pen at his Jamaica estate, Goldeneye. So, it is no surprise 007 should be sent there on his first assignment in *Dr. No*. And, it is no surprise then that Joy and I ventured there too.

I've always liked the charm of old passenger ships. My mother occasionally took me on "The Big White Steamer," the S. S. Catalina, for the 26-mile voyage to Avalon Harbor. My first date with Joy was on a 1920's vintage pleasure cruiser, the S. S. Princess Louis, which was moored in San Pedro and on which we were married a year later.

Having viewed many old movies when young in which the Vanderbilts, Astors and royalty traveled abroad on luxurious ocean liners, like the *Ile De France*, the *Normandy* and the *Queen Mary*, Joy and I were eager to embark on our first such voyage to the Caribbean. Expecting to rub elbows with the well-heeled in black tie, gowns and jewels, we were a bit let down to find our fellow passengers looking more like the first two thousand tourists through the front gates of Disneyland on a Sunday morning. Nonetheless, it was a lovely ship, a good crew

and there was certainly no shortage of food, liquor or entertainment.

After a couple of days at sea we ported at Nassau in the Bahamas and disembarked. As Joy and I strolled the streets, I had to smile recalling the *Never Say Never Again* scene that was filmed there, in which Rowan Atkinson (Mr. Bean), as British consulate attache', *Nigel Small-Fawcett*, blunders while trying to speak covertly on the street with Sean Connery, as *Bond*. *The Spy Who Loved Me* was also filmed there.

We took a taxi (our driver looked surprisingly like *Sharkey* from *License to Kill*) over the bridge to Paradise Island, on which *Thunderball* was filmed, and on which *Casino Royale* was partially filmed many years after our 1980's visit. In 1959 Huntington Hartford purchased what was then called Hog Island. He renamed it Paradise Island and built the Ocean Club, Cafe Martinique, and Hurricane Hole, the Golf Course, among other island landmarks. He also acquired from William Randolph Hearst the *Cloisters*, a 14th-century French Augustinian monastery, which Joy and I explored.

The cruise took us next to St. Thomas in the American Virgin Islands, which was purchased by the United States in 1917. Quaint, funky, typically Caribbean, it was an interesting little town with lots of Rastafarians. One got a little testy with me because I accidentally captured him in a photo of the street. He confronted me, demanding my

camera. I thought I was going to have to straighten him out, but when I did not comply he decided to move on. We wandered the shops and restaurants, and finally settled into “Rosie O’Grady’s” bar for a drink and lunch. I don’t know if it is still there, but it was a fun place then.

The next day we took a cab to Magens Bay. Clear waters, white sands - it was absolutely beautiful. We sunned, swam and enjoyed a rum drink on the beach. One scene to be remembered was Joy walking from the surf holding a pink conch, which was very reminiscent of *Honey Ryder* (Ursula Andress) doing the same on Crab Key - *Dr. No*’s island lair. The main difference being that Joy was prettier, and still is.

Years later we did Alaska’s inland passage to glacier bay on a well-respected European ocean cruise-line. Thinking this had to be classier than our Caribbean experience, I wore a tuxedo and Joy, a gown, for the Captain’s Dinner. On the way to the dining room a couple passing by stopped us and asked directions to some shipboard venue. “Sorry, we don’t know,” I answered. Looking us up and down, they then asked, “What do you do on the ship?” They thought we were performers or staff. At dinner, we found the attire ranged from Levi’s and sports jackets to leisure suits. Without doubt, the days of *first class* decorum have passed, but hopefully, *Bond* will never abandon his tux.

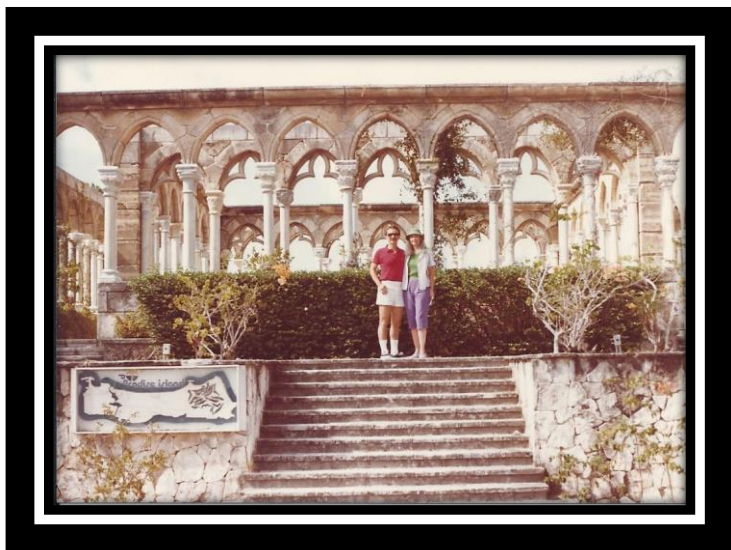
Chapter 23 – Joy by our ship in the Bahamas.



Chapter 23 – Joy on Paradise Island with our cabby, who looked like *Sharkey* from *License to Kill*.



Chapter 23 – Obie and Joy on Paradise Island, Bahamas, on which *Thunderball* was filmed, and later, *Casino Royale*.



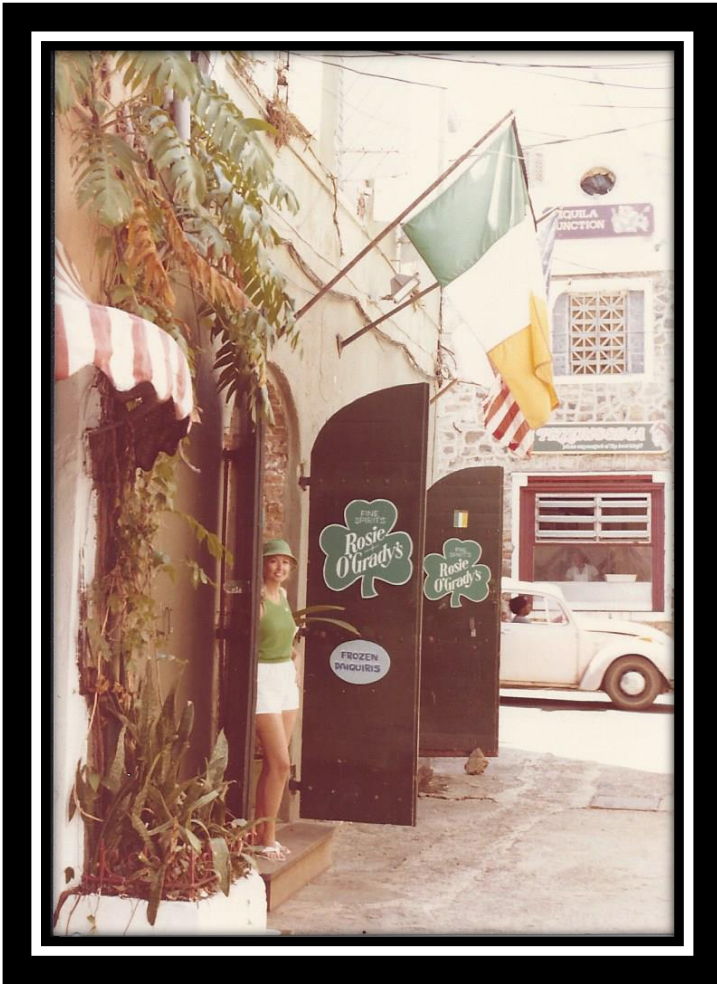
Chapter 23 – Dinner on-board, Joy and Obie at front.



Chapter 23 – Remnants of Obie's winnings at the ship-board casino.



Chapter 23 – Joy in doorway of *Rosie O'Grady's* on St. Thomas Island.



Chapter 23 – Joy holding a pink conch shell on Magens Bay, ala *Honey Ryder* in *Dr. No*.



Chapter 24: *Were We Crazy?*

Mud, snow, rain and fog. Were we crazy for proceeding with the event? Apparently not – a good time was had by all.

Some of the participants of the first *Dead Snake Hill Climb* competition felt it was a little too edgy, with hundreds of blind curves driven as fast as legally possible and each car individually clocked. So, this time we tamed it to a tour, with our wives along to make sure the speeds were reasonable.

Joy and I, as the event planners, anguished the entire proceeding week because rain and heavy winds were predicted for our dates. The mountains were green and the wildflowers in bloom, so our hope was to have an *al fresco* champagne reception at our home to enjoy the spring beauty. Saturday morning we rolled the dice and set-up outdoors. Champagne flowed, caviar, pate', cheeses and chocolates were enjoyed, and to everyone's delight the day turned out sunny with a mild breeze.

While sipping and chatting I noticed a fellow car enthusiast, Tom Callahan, strolling up our long gravel driveway. In shock I called to him, "Tom, how did you get through the gate – where's your car?" to which he answered, "After ringing your intercom buzzer for twenty minutes I decided to climb the gate – my car is still down there." What made this amazing is that our wrought iron electric gate is five feet high with security spikes, and Tom was 83 years old. Unfortunately, he had not read my email

that said to honk your horn if we don't hear the gate intercom, because we will be outside.

We were not quite as lucky the next morning, as the rain was now falling. Convening at the Twin Valleys Restaurant in Dunlap, course maps were distributed and we set out in the finish order of the first *Dead Snake* competition. Our impressive group included two Aston Martins, six Porsches and three Corvettes. Several other Aston owners had planned to participate, but the weather deterred them.

We enthusiastically wound our way up through the foothills of the Sequoia National Forest, which were partially shrouded in fog. Our original course climbed from 2,500 feet to 5,000 feet, but now, with snow concerns, we shortened the route by six miles, keeping us below 4,000 feet. Still, there was plenty of snow at road side and an occasional flake on the windscreen, which was quickly washed away by the constant rain.

Inclement weather aside, the surrounding hills were lovely with Oaks giving way to Pines as we climbed. Descending, we encountered a few mud washes across the road. Don Lovasik was a bit too spirited in one hairpin turn and slid his Vantage off into the muck; fortunately, he kept his tires spinning and worked his way out (I would not want the job of cleaning his undercarriage).

On returning to the restaurant, we settled into lunch and shared our perceptions of the drive. Though there was a smile on everyone's face, we all agreed – let's do it later in the year next time. To top off the day, we played a *James Bond* trivia contest, with Randall Plaugher winning an Aston Elite 007 wrist watch and, coincidentally, his wife, Joye, winning a bottle of *Bond Girl* perfume.

Coming back to the initial question, “Were we crazy for doing the event?”, Tom Callahan, who at that time was a practicing psychiatrist, said, “No, we were not.” But then again, Tom did *climb over my gate*.

Chapter 24 – Starting the *Dead Snake Hill Climb II*. Joy under the red umbrella by our Aston.



Chapter 24 – The Silverwood’s gate that “Tom” Climbed.



Chapter 25: *His and Her Astons*

Diamonds are Forever was partially filmed in Las Vegas, Nevada, making this venue a must for any *Bond* aficionado. There, driving *Tiffany Case's* 1971 Ford Mustang Mach 1, *Bond* races through the “Strip” in an exciting car chase scene (interestingly, Ford later purchased the Aston Martin Company).

In the movie *Bond* stays at the Whyte House Hotel, which is actually the Las Vegas Hilton. For Joy's and my visit there we stayed at the Monte Carlo Hotel, which seemed more in keeping with the *Bond* image – *ala GoldenEye*. We settled into our suite, had a nice dinner, and went to bed early, looking forward to our next day of *007ing*.

After breakfast we walked through the casino and out to the hotel's covered entrance. I glanced at my watch, then right on time heads turned as our friends, the Shanklins, arrived – Craig driving his new dark gray Aston Martin Vantage coupe, and his wife, Diane, driving her new silver Aston Martin Vantage roadster. After handshakes and hugs, Joy joined Diane in her car and I climbed in next to Craig in his. They revved their engines a couple of times, echoing nicely in the hotel *porte cochere*, then we accelerated away.

Our first destination was the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, which showcases red rock formations, sandstone peaks and the 3,000 feet high walls of the Keystone Thrust, all of which we viewed via a thirteen-mile-long one-way loop road, which allowed the Astons to loosen their reigns a bit.

Next, we motored into the Red Rock Country Club for a sip of champagne and light lunch on the veranda, overlooking the golf course and mountain vistas. We had previously entertained the Shanklins at our country home and they were certainly reciprocating in *Bond* style.

Before getting back on the road, Joy and I swapped cars, me now driving with Diane and Joy with Craig. We then backtracked across the “Strip” and headed east to Lake Las Vegas, a premier residential, golf, and resort destination situated on a privately owned 320-acre lake that features ten miles of shoreline, fishing, sailing, swimming, two championship golf courses and three world class hotels.

We parked the Astons at the Weston Hotel there and went for a stroll of the classy retail shops along the quay. Smelling garlic in the air, we settled into a quaint lakefront northern Italian bistro, ordered some wine and enjoyed a delicious seafood meal - a befitting finale’ to our Las Vegas 007 adventure.

Chapter 25 – Joy at the Monte Carlo Hotel, Las Vegas.



Chapter 25 – Obie’s and Joy’s friends, the Shanklins, picking them up at the Monte Carlo Hotel in their “his and her” Aston Martins.



Chapter 25 – Craig and Diana Shanklin and Joy at the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area.



Chapter 26: *The Best of All Worlds*

Mid-August in Monterey, California is always a spectacular week of concours, auto races, exotic car auctions, cocktail parties and fun with our Aston Martin friends! This year the festivities began on a Wednesday as ten fellow AE members met with Joy and me for dinner at the Baja Cantina in Carmel Valley - a local haunt for car buffs. Just steps from the famous Quail Lodge, this landmark eatery features sports car photos and memorabilia on the walls, and great margaritas, chips, salsa and Mexican fare.

The next morning, joined by ten more members, we all convened in Carmel to view the Pebble Beach Tour d'Elegance autos, which were staged four abreast down both sides of Ocean Avenue. This was a wonderful opportunity to be up close and personal walking amongst these rare cars, which would be shown behind roped barriers at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance on Sunday. I served as a Concours Monitor for three years in this event. Considering that many of the autos shown were multimillion dollar in value, I always told my friends, jokingly, that my job was to throw myself in front of the cars and take the bullet, should anyone shoot at them. Actually, the biggest threats to the cars were probably of being scratched by baby strollers or chain link dog leashes.

After the Concours cars departed, we met for our traditional lunch at the Cypress Inn, which provided a private room for our group. This venerable hotel, with its

thick white washed walls and red tiled roof, was built in the 1920's and designed by Hearst Castle architect, Julia Morgan. Owned by the lovely actress and singer, Doris Day, the Inn exudes old world charm and like most Carmel businesses, is pet friendly – which Joy and I love; over the years we have had many a lunch on the patio there with our Dalmatian dogs laying at tableside.

That evening Joy and I hosted a cocktail party at our summer rental house in Pacific Grove. With martinis, shaken-not-stirred, tasty *hors d'oeuvres* and *James Bond*/Aston videos on the flat-screen, a good time was had by all. Actually, there was a little snag: A guest spilled a glass of red wine on one of the white couches. It did take some effort to remove the stain, but the best part was that it gave me something about which to jokingly chide him forever.

Friday, John and Karen Worthing joined us at “The Quail,” considered by many to be the premier car show of the week. Limited to 3,000 persons and staged on the manicured lawns of the Quail Country Club Golf Course, this venue featured a unique selection of autos and unlimited consumption of champagne, caviar, fine wines and ethnic foods. The tickets were expensive - \$450/person, but it is a “must do once” experience. There, the field of special autos was rimmed by colorful party tents offering cuisines of different nations – the British tent had a variety of ales and a clever presentation of fish & chips in little faux-newspaper cones. Of course, Rolls Royce, Jaguar, Porsche and many other marques had paddocks show-casing their latest models. At Aston Martin's the new Vanquish (this one in periwinkle blue) was displayed. Per a request given me by Tim Cottingham, the conscientious Aston Martin Heritage Trust Registrar, I dutifully recorded the VIN number of this new Vanquish

and reported it to him. There was also an unpainted new Vanquish, no doors, trunk lid or hood, revealing the interesting details of its carbon fiber body, components, engine, trans and exhaust system.

At the Jaguar tent I had the pleasure again of visiting with Ian Callum, the designer of the Aston Martin DB7 and DB9. Joy mentioned to him the similarity of the new Jags to our DB7, to which Ian replied with a smile, “Yes, that is my fault” – Ian was now designing for Jag.

At midday, a phalanx of California Highway Patrol motorcycle officers led in a procession of rumbling Cobras, all of which were scheduled to compete Saturday at the nearby Laguna Seca Raceway. We also saw renowned Le Mans racer Alain de Cadenet there and I told him how much we loved his video series, “Victory by Design,” in which he drove and commented on each progressive Aston model from the oldest to the newest.

Winding up the day, we stopped by the Pacific Grove Concours and visited with friends, the Slamowitz and Haselbachs, who had their Aston Martins competing in the concours.

Saturday was the Rolex Motorsport Reunion at Laguna Seca, where the Aston Martin Owners Club had its traditional lunch tent and corral. That evening we were joined by several AE members at the Aston Martin Villa in the Monterey hills overlooking the Pacific Ocean. There to greet and host us were Julian Jenkins, President of Aston Martin of the Americas, Cristina Hibbs, the manager of Los Gatos Aston Martin, and their excellent sales staff, Wout Stokman, Charley Cole and Adam Wittmayer.

Drinks and *hors d'oeuvres* flowed, many took new model test drives and some thrilled at doing the wraparound screen race track simulator. I watched one member and laughed as his computer generated race car slid off the course. But, when it was my turn I lasted less than a lap before my stomach protested. I'm fine on a real track, but there is something about computer simulated motion that throws me off. Luckily, Joy had a medicinal martini waiting as I wobbled from the seat.

The party week ended Sunday with our visit to the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, which featured the Cars of the Maharajas, Mercer, Fiat, Saoutchik Coachwork, AC Cobra and Sport Custom Hot Rods, at which our friend, Steve Dean was a judge. As always, this event is held at the grand Pebble Beach Country Club and Lodge on its 18th fairway along the sea, with pleasure yachts gently rocking at anchor. To accommodate the thousands of spectators, parking was arranged miles away and we were bused to the Pebble Beach Polo Grounds, which is up hill of the Lodge. The stroll down took us through many interesting auto, art and merchandizing exhibits. Once we reached the Lodge and passed through the main lobby, the view across the showing field was amazing; an ocean of nicely attired people, ladies in broad brimmed hats and gents in blazers, out as far as the eye could see, swarming the world's finest collection of wheels. And, it was no surprise to see notorieties, like Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jay Leno amongst the spectators. Of particular interest were the Maharajas Rolls, some with hunting rifles mounted alongside.

Everything was magnificently organized, except the weather, which varied from overcast and mist to sun shine. As the day went on and our legs tired, we found a nice

bench, ordered glasses of champagne and settled-in to chat with friends and “people watch.” It was an ideal finish to a wonderful week – 007 style.

Chapter 26 – Obie, Joy and Aston friends at the Baja Cantina, Carmel Valley.



Chapter 26 – Lunch at Doris Day’s charming Cypress Inn,
after the Pebble Beach Tour d’Elagance.



Chapter 26 – Cocktails at the Silverwood’s summer house
in Pacific Grove.



Chapter 26 – Obie with Ian Callum, the designer of the Aston Martin DB7.



Chapter 26 – Obie at the *Quail* with race legend, Alain de Cadenet.



Chapter 26 – The British “Fish & Chips” booth at the *Quail*.



Chapter 26 – Phalanx of California Highway Patrol ready to escort AC Cobras, the featured marque, from the *Quail* to *Historics* races at Laguna Seca.



Chapter 26 – Aston Martin DB4GT Zagato at the
Historics at Laguna Seca.



Chapter 26 – The Aston Martin Villa at Monterey.



Chapter 26 – Aston Martin One-77 at the Villa – only 77 made, at about \$1,500,000 each.



Chapter 26 – Aston Martin DP100 concept car at the Villa.



Chapter 26 – Cristina Hibbs, the lovely sales manager for Los Gatos Aston Martin, at the Villa.



Chapter 26 – Maharaja and Rolls at the Pebble Beach
Concours d'Elegance.



Chapter 27: *Happy Birthday James*

What a spectacular occasion – 007 would be proud! And, what better place to stage *Bond's* 50th Birthday Party than the elegant San Francisco Palace Hotel. *A View to a Kill* was set in San Francisco, with a daring fight scene high on the Golden Gate Bridge between Roger Moore as *Bond* and Christopher Walken as the villain, *Max Zorin*.

When in San Francisco, the Palace Hotel is Joy's and my home-away-from-home. Originally built in 1875 the Palace embodies grandeur not even rivaled by Europe's finest hotels. Its garden court dining room is spectacular, with crystal chandeliers, gold filigreed marble columns and an atrium ceiling. One of our favorite haunts is the hotel's Pied Piper Bar, so named for its massive *Pied Piper of Hamelin* mural painting by Maxfield Parrish, which hangs above the long mahogany bar in the richly paneled room. Parrish was the Thomas Kincade of his time, with most homes in the 30's having a Parrish print in the parlor. My grandparents had one over the upright piano, entitled, "Daybreak," a copy of which hangs on my home office wall.

Each December Joy and I arrange a Holiday Party in the Palace's Marble Room for our Aston Martin and *Bond* enthusiast friends. This year was special, as it coincided with the 50th anniversary of the first *James Bond* movie, *Dr. No*, released in 1962 – the year I graduated from high school, and the movie that initiated my 007 quest.

In keeping with the occasion, on display were my 007 embossed leather bound case of 24 Swiss made *James Bond* themed watches - one to commemorate each movie; a “*Shaken-not-Stirred*” license plate holder encasing a collection of British postage stamps featuring the *Bond* movies; posters of the first and most recent *Bond* movies; and, of course, a glass encased 9MM Walther PPK pistol - *Bond*’s weapon of choice.

Throughout the cocktail hour we enjoyed champagne and *hors d’oeuvres* while engaging in a *James Bond* movie trivia contest. The lady’s prize, a bottle of “*Bond Girl*” perfume, was won by Lynn Kovach, and the gent’s prize, a *Skyfall* poster and *Bond* magazine, went to Les Melburg. Adding to the merriment, names were drawn for an Aston hat and Aston Martin/*Bond* magazine, won by Rick & Anna Baker; and in finale’, Les Melburg was the drawing winner of a 1/18 scale model DB9, which I’m sure now adorns a shelf in his architectural firm’s office.

As an interesting aside, the Palace Hotel was also the venue where *Sam Spade*, (played by Humphry Bogart in the movie) had lunch and met the *Fat Man* (played by Sidney Greenstreet) in Dashiell Hammett’s novel, *The Maltese Falcon*.

Chapter 27 – *James Bond's 50th Birthday Party at the San Francisco Palace Hotel's "Marble Room."*



Chapter 27 – Obie’s collection of *Bond* movie themed watches and other paraphernalia on display at the party.



Chapter 27 – Obie’s Walther PPK - *James Bond*’s pistol of choice.



Chapter 27 – Obie with some *007* buddies at the Palace party.



Chapter 28: *The Redwoods*

Though *James Bond* had never chased or escaped a villain in California's coastal Redwoods grove, he would surely have enjoyed sliding around some curves in his Aston Martin with these eighteen smiling faces.

The event started with a Friday evening champagne and *hors d'oeuvres* reception hosted by Los Gatos Luxury Cars (LGLC), which had made special lodging arrangements at the elegant Hotel Los Gatos for those of us from out of town.

The next morning we were served a light breakfast in the dealership showroom, surrounded by new Astons, Bentleys (*Bond's* original car of choice) and Lamborghinis, after which we set off on a well-planned drive, piloted by LGLC Product Specialist, Charlie Cole.

Our eleven sleek cars turned heads as we threaded the streets of Los Gatos and ventured up into the hills. Over the next three hours we traversed 90 miles of roads winding through dense verdant Redwood forests and racing along the rugged sunny California coast. On reaching the beach town of Davenport we stopped to cool our brakes and partake of a tasty lunch at the *Roadhouse Restaurant*.

Refreshed and relaxed, we left the coast and re-entered the shaded forest for a fun sequence of tight curves, braking into each and accelerating out to the next. With a wrong turn or two, the group did get split up a couple of times, but via cell phones we eventually reunited and the drive concluded as all should: no car problems, accidents or tickets – just happy Aston owners.

That evening we reassembled at the swank *California Café* in Los Gatos, where LGLC treated us to a magnificent meal. All-in-all, the event could not have been better.

Chapter 28 – Obie’s AE club meeting for a drive at the Los Gatos Aston Martin dealership.



Chapter 28 – Heading out to the California coastal Redwood grove.



Chapter 28 – Assembled for lunch at the Roadhouse Restaurant in Davenport.



Chapter 28 – Dinner at the trendy California Café in Los Gatos.



Chapter 29: *Little Nell*

Most people associate *James Bond* with martinis, but he was also a connoisseur of champagne and fine wines. He preferred Chianti on the trains in both *From Russia with Love* and *For Your Eyes Only*; and he drinks a 1953 Mouton Rothschild in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*; and a Liebfraumilch in *Live and Let Die*. In *Casino Royale* he declared the Tattinger Blanc de Blancs Brut 1943 as, "...probably the finest Champagne in the world;" and in *MoonRaker* he drinks Dom Perignon.

So, to further hone our wine pallets, *ala Bond*, I got some Aston Martin friends together to help Joy and me plunder the richness of wineries which have replaced the old gold mines in Amador County.

Crunching across the gravel parking lot of the "Imperial Hotel," built in 1878, our four modern Astons presented a contrast in time. That evening we enjoyed cocktails and a delicious meal in the hotel's dining room. The next morning we picked up our sack lunches from Andrea's Bakery and set out for some wine tasting, our first stop being "Vino Noceto," which specialized in savory Sangioveses. Next, it was on to little "Story Winery" to enjoy its surprising broad selection, from Barberas to Zins.

"Helwig Vineyards," whose classy facilities rival the best of Napa/Sonoma, provided a lovely covered lunch area for us, and sweeping views of the surrounding hills and vineyards. On next to the venerable "Renwood Winery," which has the oldest Zin vines in the nation, and probably

the most knowledgeable tasting room manager – Gregg Lamer.

We visited “Driven Cellars” next because they boasted a collection of classic cars, which turned out to be somewhat of an eclectic pile of rusted tractors, trucks, old sedans and a mini-helicopter that looked like *Little Nell* from the *Bond* movie, *You Only Live Twice*. As it turned out, their wines were very good.

We ended the day at Young Winery, where we were greeted by their two large labs, who promptly initiated our car tires. In addition to a nice tasting room, good wines and beautiful labels, Young had a small lagoon in which was moored a large pleasure yacht – very different.

That afternoon Cliff and Susan Franklin treated us to cocktails in their magnificent forest mansion, after which we drove to the old mining town of Plymouth for a gourmet meal at the area’s best restaurant, *Taste*. The next morning, after another great Imperial Hotel breakfast, it was handshakes, hugs, kisses and off to our respective homes - with many bottles of wine rattling in the trunk.

Chapter 29 – Arriving at the Imperial Hotel in Gold Rush country.



Chapter 29 – Our group visiting a winery.



Chapter 29 – Wining and dining.



Chapter 30: *Shaken and Disturbed*

In August of 2014 Joy and I were invited to a party hosted by Kevin Buckler, who won the *24 Hours of Le Mans* driving a Porsche, and now has the Aston Martin race team - “TRG.”

Kevin’s business headquarters are in Petaluma, California. Arriving through the office area you pass an enormous trophy case filled with awards for his racing achievements. The building’s large shop area, normally parked with race cars, was now arranged with presentations of *hors d’oeuvres* and a bar serving tasty selections from his *Adobe Road Winery*. The walls had large viewing screens showing the *Miami Vice* TV series, which was the party theme, and many dressed accordingly - me in a Hawaiian shirt and white sports coat.

Present were most of the drivers and race teams that were scheduled to compete in the International Motor Sports Association GT class race at Sonoma Raceway the next day. Kevin is not only a winner on the track, he also entertains, “first class.”

The next day Joy and I went to the track. In particular, Joy wanted to see the Indy cars, which were preparing to race in the main event the following day. Some might say that Indy cars are the American version of the European Formula One. Long, low and open wheeled, these

spectacular machines race on oval and road courses at speeds exceeding 200 miles per hour.

Walking through the paddocks, we entered the Penske Team garage and saw a fellow working on Will Power's car, who is Joy's favorite driver and the reigning Indy champion (at that time). As I approached and recognized who it was, I said in awe, "You *are* Will Power," to which he responded in his Aussie accent, "No, I'm just a mechanic." I said, "No, you really are Will Power." He then smiled and nodded his head.

I told him that he was Joy's favorite driver and asked if I could take their photo together, to which he kindly agreed. The occasion made her day.

That evening, a sizeable earthquake hit the area and Will's hotel had to be evacuated at two in the morning. On race day, he spun-out and did not finish well, attributing it partly to not getting a good night's sleep - he had been *shaken and disturbed*.

Chapter 30 – Joy with Will Power – Indy Car champion.



Chapter 31: *Take My Picture*

Every year motorsports enthusiasts flock to California's central coast to frolic in the week long series of concours, tours, races and auctions. One such event is the Pacific Grove Concours and Tour, in which Joy, I and some of our AE friends chose to participate in 2014.

Our festivities commenced earlier in the week, again, with dinner at the Baja Cantina, a local car crowd haunt in Carmel Valley. The next morning, Thursday, we assembled in Carmel to welcome the Pebble Beach Tour d'Elegance autos as they arrived and parked four abreast across both sides of Ocean Avenue. These are the same cars that would be judged on Sunday at the Pebble Beach resort for the Concours d'Elegance, the world's most renown car show.

Afterwards we enjoyed our traditional lunch at Doris Day's lovely old hotel, the Cypress Inn. That evening we partied at the Aston Martin Villa high atop the Monterey hills, where the host, Los Gatos Luxury Cars, treated us to an endless flow of cocktails and delicious *hors d'oeuvres*. New model test drives were available, and Le Mans and Daytona class Aston race cars were on display.

On Friday Joy and I met for lunch with friends at the Pacific Grove Golf Course club house, after which we all registered our cars for the Pacific Grove Concours and

staged them along Lighthouse Avenue with about 300 other eclectic entries ranging from new Corvettes and Porsches to old American muscle cars and British classic sports models.

Later, all the cars were led on a police escorted Tour of the 17 Mile Drive. I have never before had the experience of legally driving at speed through so many stop signs and red signals! It was a delight to hear and see all the spectators lining the route, waiving and cheering us on.

On returning to Pacific Grove we attended the awards banquet at which special category winners were honored – best interior, best engine compartment, best paint work, and so on. Throughout the ceremony, having noticed an official earlier in the day spending quite a bit of time inspecting my car, I kept saying that I suspected something might be coming my way. As the awards drew down to the final one, I turned on my camera, handed it to Joy and said, “Get ready to take my picture,” at which she and our friends just laughed. Then, with a hush in the room, an official announced, “And...the ‘Dream Car’ award goes to...entry #230 - a 1997 Aston Martin supercharged coupe owned by Obie R. Silverwood!”

As applause erupted I proudly took the stage to receive my lovely engraved plaque and bottle of wine. On returning to our table I was greeted by Joy and our friends shaking their heads in amazement. And, of course, in the excitement of the moment, Joy had forgotten to *take my picture!*

Chapter 31 – Astons at the Pacific Grove Concours.



Chapter 31 – Obie’s DB7 wins *best of show* “Dream Car” award.



Chapter 32: *Good-bye Moonraker – almost*

GoldenEye, Octopussy, Skyfall, The Living Daylights, From Russia with Love, The Spy Who Loved Me and SPECTRE - what scenario do these *Bond* films share? In each, *James Bond* fought a villain on a train. Though I would prefer it not to have happened, the following recounts Joy's and my *007* adventure with a villain on a European train.

The heavily armed, black uniformed guard shot us an occasional glance. We were seated across from a bullet proofed window in the bomb-proofed, subterranean lobby of the United States Embassy in Bern. I was frustrated and tired. After an unrestful night interrupted by bouts of cold sweat, I had risen to a 6:00 AM wake-up call. Joy and I dressed and took the elevator to the lobby where a large envelop awaited us at the hotel's front desk. In it were two first class train tickets to Bern, the Swiss capital, and directions to the Embassy, kindly provided by our good friends, Niccolo' and Sandra Gozzi - both of whom are lawyers in Zurich.

We had spent the previous week skiing, dining and partying with Niccolo' and Sandra at the luxurious Tschuggen Grand Hotel in Arosa. Some days we took the hotel's private monorail up to an extensive network of chair-lifts and gondolas that service the Arosa and

Lenzerheide Alps. We skied the vast array of runs, lunched at the hillside warming huts and laughed over *après ski* cocktails. Other days we ventured down to the village for tea and cakes at the Alpensohne stubli, or a horse drawn sled ride around the frozen lake. A particularly memorable evening was our fondue dinner in the hotel's "Igloo Restaurant," made of solid ice, where the staff draped us in furs and plied us with Kirsch between courses. Dipping a skewered bread cube into the Kirsch before submersing it into the hot fondue cheese made for an absolutely savory treat!

Before checking-out I asked the hotel director, Leo Maissen, if any *James Bond* actors frequented the Tschuggen. He said there were none that came to mind, but I suspicion he was exercising Swiss discretion.

Our "misadventure" began on the return trip to Zurich for our flight home. The hotel had thoughtfully shipped my skis and two large bags ahead to Zurich's main station, so we would not have to handle them when changing trains at Chur. On arriving at Chur we disembarked, found the platform for the Zurich train and settled into a first class coach. I took a seat by the window, with Joy next to me on the aisle. My shoulder bag and her purse were laid on the two empty seats opposing us. I then went upstairs to the bar to get us drinks. When I returned Joy had a disturbed look on her face and a strange fellow was now sitting in the seat where my shoulder bag had been. I said, "What's this?"

Joy answered, “I don’t know...this man just walked up and pointed to the seat and said it was his seat, and he moved your bag to the over-head storage rack.”

This did not make sense, because there was no reserved seating and there were many other empty seats available. I tried to catch his eye, but he was sitting somewhat huddled against the window, staring out and would not look at me. From the expression on his face, his posture and behavior, I was starting to think he was mentally off.

The train was slowing now to make a quick stop at Landquart. The interloper waived at the window as though he saw someone he knew, then quickly stood up, grabbed his jacket from the overhead storage rack, clutched it to his chest, hurried down the aisle and exited the train just as it pulled away from the small station. Seeing him go I felt a slight sense of relief. I sat thinking a moment about the strange fellow, then something occurred to me: I got up and looked in the overhead rack – no shoulder bag. We had been cleverly robbed!

Everything important was in that bag: my passport, wallet, driver’s license, credit cards, two pair of prescription eye glasses, camera, hundreds of dollars in cash, claim tickets for our luggage, keys and parking claim ticket for my car at the airport in California, and, my *James Bond Moonraker* wrist watch from my collectors set of twenty *Bond* themed time pieces.

While Joy called the credit card companies to cancel mine, I searched for a conductor, but none was to be found. It

would have been useless anyway, they certainly were not going to turn the train around and go look for the thief. Then it hit me, I could not leave Switzerland without a passport. We were reserved to fly out early the next morning, so I needed to act quickly. A young man sitting nearby overheard our plight and kindly provided us the phone number of the U.S. Consulate in Zurich, which I called. The Marine guard who answered said, because it was Sunday, no Consulate services were available and that the Consulate could not issue passports anyway. He said I would have to go to the U.S. Embassy in Bern, and that I would need a police report of the robbery, two photos, and that I had better be there when it opened if I wanted to get an emergency passport issued the same day. Without doubt, we were going to miss our flight home.

Shocked and sullen, we settled down in our seats for the remaining trip to Zurich. Earlier, before changing trains, we had chatted with a British couple who had also been guests at the Tschuggen. The wife was now walking past us in the aisle and said, "Hello again." I informed her of our misfortune and, without a blink, she offered to provide us cash if needed. I thanked her for the kind gesture and explained that Joy still had some money and her credit cards.

On arriving at Zurich, we claimed our luggage that had been shipped ahead, which was pretty tricky without claim tickets – the train station allowed me to sort through hundreds of pieces to find ours. We then went to the police station and burned two hours filing a crime report. While waiting I was trying to determine how to call information

on our cell phone, because I needed to contact the airline to cancel our morning flight. A Swiss woman there, who was also reporting a crime, heard me. She dialed the appropriate number and handed me her cell phone to use, which was very thoughtful. On the way to our hotel I mentioned the robbery to the taxi driver, who expressed his condolence as though all Switzerland had been marred by the incident. I was surprised when he refused to accept a tip as I paid the fare. That evening Niccolo' and Sandra joined us for a drink in the hotel bar. To make things easier for us, they said they would go purchase our train tickets to Bern and leave them at the front desk.

In retrospect, we realized that when the thief stood up to get his coat from the overhead he had wrapped it around my bag, which is why he clutched it to his chest, rather than putting it on or over his arm. Also, we recall seeing another fellow on the train who had passed by and looked down at us earlier. That same fellow had positioned himself in the aisle to block me had I tried to stop the thief from leaving with my bag, and he exited the train behind the thief, obviously his partner. Very frustrating, but the deed was done and we had no choice now other than head to Bern to get an emergency passport.

As the reality of our situation intensified, I was awash in a range of emotions: anger, frustration, violation, confusion, but there was also an emotion I had never experienced – the feeling of being trapped in a foreign country, I could not leave without a passport.

We did not have to wait long in the Embassy lobby before a person appeared in the bullet proofed window and called my name. I explained the situation and was assigned the number “one” for treatment by an Embassy officer. Conveniently, there was a self-service passport photo machine there and I had already downloaded and completed the emergency passport application by the time my number was called. Two hours later we had my new passport and were on the train back to Zurich, and the next morning we were on a flight home.

Unexpectedly, I was contacted a few days later by the Swiss rail authority. It had recovered my shoulder bag, which Niccolo’ then collected and FedExed to me. I was delighted to find almost everything intact, including my *James Bond Moonraker* wrist watch. Of course, the cash and credit cards were gone, against which the thieves had already charged about \$1,000 in the fifteen minutes before they were canceled.

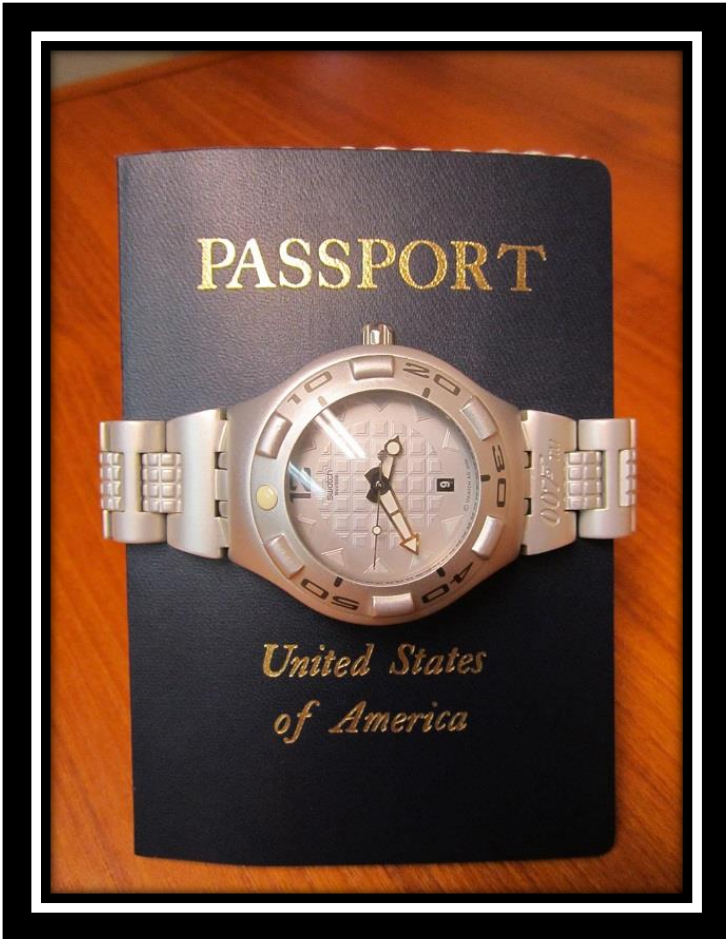
Looking back, I appreciate the help and kindness extended by so many – the British woman on the train who offered money; the young man who provided the Consulate’s number; the woman at the police station who offered the use of her phone; the taxi cab driver who refused a tip; and, of course, the generosity of our friends, the Gozzis.

I particularly appreciated the sense of security I experienced on entering our U.S. Embassy and the consideration exercised by its staff. When I explained to the guard there that we had been robbed, I think he read the depth of my distress. His simple response was, “You are

safe here.” It was one of those rare occasions when we can actually experience the value of where our tax dollars are spent.

I was fortunate that I did not have to fight our train villain, which raises the question, “What would *Bond* have done?” I’m sure he would have returned to Landquart, found the thief and severely dealt with him.

Chapter 32 - Obie's Emergency passport and *Moonraker* watch, which was recovered.



Chapter 32 - Obie, Joy & Niccolo, *apres ski* at Arosa.



Chapter 32 – Obie with Sandra.



Chapter 32 - Joy at Arosa.



Chapter 32 – Obie and Joy in the Tschuggen Igloo restaurant, with walls of ice.



Chapter 33: *The Desire, Money and Time*

How I developed the desire, made the money and had the time to play at being 007 is best related through a little history.

I graduated from high school in 1962, just as *James Bond* came on the scene in *Dr. No*. That movie and each subsequent one inspired me to emulate *Bond*. I admired his gentleman image, linguistic and athletic skills, *savior faire* and world travels. In the years to come I would study foreign languages, train in Alpine skiing, sword fencing, Judo and Karate, refine my knowledge of wines and globe-trot - tuxedo clad - experiencing the finest hotels and restaurants. But first, I needed to make the money to do it.

Throughout my high school years I had been a Ham radio enthusiast and worked at a television repair shop, afternoons and weekends. After graduating I took a job at TRW Aerospace Company as an electronics technician. Over the next seven years I rose to senior technician, then lab analyst and, finally, research assistant, providing me the opportunity to work with the nation's top scientists on interplanetary spacecraft and classified military projects. *Bond*-like, I had secret clearance and, on occasion, flew to the U.S. Airforce's Special Weapons Laboratory to test spy satellite equipment.

During that period I was also attending college classes at night, and graduated in 1970 with a B. Sc. in Business Administration from California State University at Long Beach. About that time, TRW had a big layoff, so I took a position with National Cash Register (NCR) marketing commercial computer systems.

Joy and I met in 1972 and married a year later on-board the S. S. Princess Louis, a 1920's cruise ship moored in San Pedro harbor. Beautiful, intelligent and cultured, I was fortunate to catch Joy, but it was not all luck – I am a very good salesman. She had studied fashion design at Stephens College, been a model, then went on to earn a Juris Doctor degree from Western States Law School. Ever the adventurer and good-sport, she has been and continues to be my consummate *Bond girl*.

After five years at NCR I was anxious for a change, desiring more control over my future. A couple of my friends had gotten into commercial real estate brokerage, in which you are virtually your own boss. So, I decided to pursue that route and in 1976 I joined Grubb & Ellis, a firm in Newport Beach, California. There was no salary, but the firm would loan new agents \$3,000 every ninety days to help carry them until they created some business. After nine months and \$9,000 in loans I still had not made a penny. Not wanting to go any further in debt with the company, I sold my Hobie Cat sailboat for \$2,000, which carried Joy and me another couple of months.

In the twelfth month, my canvassing efforts finally produced fruit: I brokered the sale of a 25,000 square feet

industrial building, a 22-unit apartment building and a 19,000 square foot office building, netting me about \$23,000 in commissions, which in today's (2016) dollars would be about \$200,000. After paying back the company loans and income taxes, we used part of those earnings to take our first trip to Europe, visiting Germany, Austria and Switzerland - the beginning of my 007 travel adventures.

Over the next twelve months I made a few deals, but they did not result in much commission and my savings were getting very low. Toward the end of 1978, coming home from work, my Porsche broke-down, requiring a very expensive repair. A few days later I got word my father and stepmother had been killed in a car accident. It was a tough time. Low on cash and discouraged, I started looking for a salaried job back in electronics. Then, as was the unpredictability of brokerage, things started breaking in my favor. By the end of 1979 I had made quite a bit of money and felt fortunate that I had not found a salaried job during my time of doubt.

The next couple of years I specialized in industrial properties and continued developing my transaction skills and clientele. In 1981 I opened my own office, "Occidental Brokerage," and proceeded to negotiate many of California's larger industrial real estate deals. I was then averaging about \$250,000 a year in commissions (in today's dollars). My best year was 1984 in which I made over \$500,000 (in today's dollars).

Early in my brokerage career I canvassed an older fellow who owned a small industrial building. I asked him if he

would like to sell it, hoping to get a listing. His response was, “No, that building is my retirement income.” At that instant I realized that is what I must do – own buildings – because I knew I would never have a corporate or government pension. So, while most of my colleagues spent their big commissions on Mercedes, Rolexes and water-front houses, I invested mine in the ownership of properties, which allowed me to retire in 1989 at forty-five years of age with a comfortable net worth and sufficient investment income to never need work again.

That explains how I made the money to live the *007 life*. As to how I had the time, I seldom worked more than six hours a day - by choice, and never hesitated to take time off to play. Retiring at forty-five provided even more time to play, and the fact that Joy and I chose not to have children allowed us the flexibility to play as we pleased.

I’m not religious, but I feel I’ve gone to heaven early – proverbially. After retiring we purchased some acreage in the foothills of the Sequoia National Forest, upon which we built our small, but luxurious, dream home. Peace and quiet, beautiful scenery and good trout fishing - it’s wonderful! And, being able to live the *007 life* too is the cherry on top.

Chapter 33 – Obie and Joy at the Palace Hotel in St. Moritz, Switzerland again, thirty years after their first visit - still *Bonding!* And yes, the white dinner jacket was appropriate this time – it was summer.

